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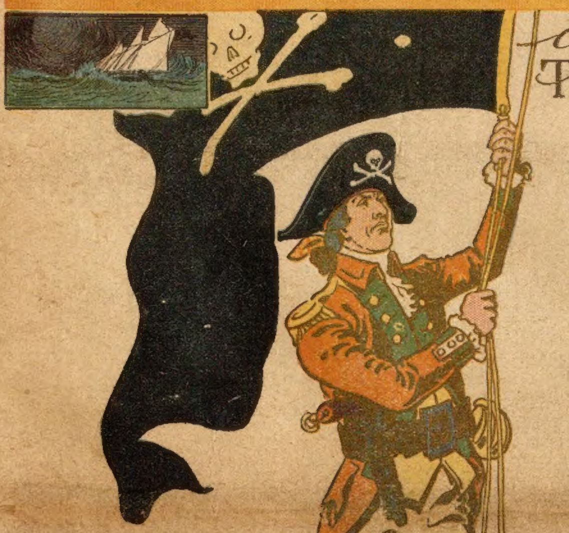
The Sea Trailer

or - Afloat with the Buccaneers.

by Wm. H. Manning



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CHAPTER I.

THE WRONGED MAN.

A TOWERING mansion a little back of the steep bluff, and a boat crossing the ocean water that broke gently on the narrow beach at the foot of the rise—these were the more prominent features of the scene looked down upon by the soaring night fowls. In the boat was a man who rowed with slow, almost noiseless efforts, as if wishing to be free from discovery.

His hands moved mechanically, and all his attention was on the mansion. He had come secretly, and, for reasons important to him, he coveted the notice of no man. If such a person had been near, and had been able to penetrate the obscurity of the night that was over everything, he would have seen that the face of the rower was gloomy, while his knit brows indicated hostility toward some one or something.

Reese Barron believed that the mansion and its wide acres had been stolen from him.

His father, Clayton Barron, had once owned the property and been the descendant of the Virginia family that had possessed it for several generations, but when, after a life largely given to travel in foreign lands, word had come that he was dead, it was claimed and, in the estimation of the law, proved that he had wasted his estate, or in some other manner dissipated it; and a ship-broker in a coast town had produced a mortgage and other papers of indebtedness that swamped the Barron holdings. Reese, the only heir, was represented by a lawyer, but he had found that no flaw was visible in the claim, and the calamity was not checked.

The heir was then but twelve years old, but he had doubted where others believed, and he had beset the broker with passionate words, and manfully struck him in the face with his boyish fist. Small as the fist was it had brought a sting, and perhaps the sting remained, in a way, when the physical sensation was gone.

Reese had been taken by relatives to Florida, where he remained until the beginning of the Revolutionary War, through which he served as a soldier until he was captured, taken to England and confined in Forton military prison for two years.

Now, a year after the proclamation of peace between the two countries, he was looking at his ancestral home for the first time since he left it as a child.

Time had not softened his resentment against the ship-broker. For twelve years he had brooded over his supposed wrongs, and brooded as only those naturally of moody nature can. The two years in the British prison had not tended to lighten his spirits, and when, wishing to view the old home again, he had come under cover of night, he brought a face darkened by scowling brows and grim to a radical degree at the fast-closed lips.

Having the convictions of a right-minded man, and being a believer in lawful proceedure, he told himself that he hoped the ship-broker would not cross his path, but the peaceable mood had disappeared before he neared the shore and he was beset with a thirst to meet him and square the old account. The hands that dipped the oars clutched the wood the tighter because they longed to close around the broker's throat.

After a time he held the oars clear and continued his survey.

The place was Winfettle Cove, a trivial tongue of the ocean that, making inland, gave the plantation, a half-mile frontage on the tongue. Back of the bluff was not only the mansion but the minor buildings, including the quarters of the slaves, and it was as generous and sightly a stretch as the land beyond was noble and productive. Barron had been reared to believe that no other State in the country was the equal of Virginia, and, long exiled from his own, he was that night full of State loyalty that was only second to his devotion to the country for which he had fought and suffered so gallantly.

And he was robbed of his birthright!

Somewhere in that silent, dark mansion he supposed Jacob Gower, the broker, to be resting in the sleep of luxury, and his choler rose high and urged him on to rash deeds. The stillness, which seemed unnatural, suggested that he could go there and do his will, and the hand of revenge can accomplish many things at night. This mood, this temptation, he forced back relentlessly, strong in his resolution to break no law, human or otherwise, and yet, conscious of the weakness of the flesh, he considered it expedient to forego the opportunity of walking among the buildings so dear to him.

While in the boat he could do no lawless act, and he feared to trust himself too far.

Long he sat and gazed, while the boat moved so little in the sluggish water that it remained of its will where he would have it. Had it drifted we would scarcely have realized the fact until distance shut off his view, for his mind was racked by conflicting emotions. Temptation had returned, and though he combated it, victory was not easy.

Jacob Grower had robbed him of his birthright. Must he submit to have it so? Must he go away and leave the robber to enjoy his stolen wealth, the Barron home? Must he sink his own identity and, instead of being a Virginia gentleman, go to his temporary stopping place that was not home, count his few hundred dollars and then fall to toil like a driven ox? This was something, but to know that the broker had his rightful possession—that was maddening.

A dangerous mood was getting him fast once more, and he abruptly started, plunged the oars into the water and prepared for the first pull that would take him away from Winfettle Cove and temptation. Up to that time he had kept his record clean, and it was well to think of Jacob Gower at a distance.

The pull was not made then. While his gaze still lingered upon the mansion something crept into his vision from one side, as if appealing for attention, and, shifting his scrutiny he saw what he had not before noticed.

A red tongue was mounting from the gloom and writhing toward the low-hanging clouds.

Barron instantly became a different man. He knew that the red tongue was stirring from the overseer's house, and that it was fire. Meanwhile, the whole line of buildings remained dark and still.

Quickly the spirit of revenge passed away and was succeeded by that of the protector. Barron dipped his oars again, but whirled the boat about and pulled stoutly for the shore. Remembering only that the ancestral home was in danger he was eager to know why neither overseers, slaves nor household had seen the fire, he was going to do his best.

Pausing merely to draw the boat partly upon the gravely sand he ran up the bluff and had the level ground before him. Then he fell to shouting the alarm, though the outcries brought no more than fresh surprise. Why did nobody appear at his call? Where were the ship-broker, the overseer and the negoes?

By that time he knew that the lesser house was doomed. The red tongue was longer, wider and more violent, and close by it other tongues had broken through the roof.

The door was shut, but he flung it back and leaped inside, still shouting. Entering thus he nearly fell over a human form, dimly revealed by the fire on the upper floor. Checking himself, he stood still, gazing in wonder, for the position of the form was strange. The head and shoulders were on the floor, but the legs rose to the banister posts.

In the gloom he might have wrestled long with the mystery, but a voice from the dragging head.

"Help, help!" was the feeble plea. "Get me out, or I'm a dead man. The house is on fire!"

Barron bent promptly.

"Let me lift you—"

"Stop, stop! Get me free, first. I am caught in the banisters."

"What?"

"See, see!" and the man made a feeble gesture. "Use your hand. My foot is in the trap. Break me clear!"

CHAPTER II.

LEARNS THE PAST.

The situation was still perplexing, but when Barron had searched for causes he found that the "trap" was simple in a way. Otherwise, the man was surely in a predicament. One of his feet was caught between two uprights of the banisters.

"I am the caretaker," he further explaned. "I wanted to start the hall lamp, and as I had misplaced the long-handled lighter I swung myself over the rail and reached. I slipped and fell, and was unconscious for what I think a long time. When I regained my sense I found my foot as you see it, and I could not rise nor free myself. How the fire started I don't know."

Barron was briefly puzzled how to extricate the man in the quickest manner but his companion spoke again.

"There is an axe just inside the kitchen door—"

The young man rushed away, secured the implement mentioned, and soon had the obstacle out of the way. All the while he heard the crackling of the fire above, and cinders began to fall.

"Drag me outside and save the building," proceeded the man.

"The first I will do, but the second I cannot. The fire has too strong a hold. This structure is doomed, but as these is no wind it may not spread. Where are the negroes, and where is—"

"I am the only person here. Get me out!"

Barron stooped and lifted, whereupon the man groaned loudly. His helper paused, and then he added:

"I am a dying man! I thought so from the first. In falling I must have sustained an inward rupture. Life is going fast."

Barron tried to reply encouragingly, but as there was no time to lose he lifted and carried steadily and so conveyed the caretaker out. Being informed that the nearest cabin was a comfortable place it was utilized for a hospital, and the injured man laid in a bed. He appeared to be at the point of fainting, but after the first groan he had borne the pain firmly.

"I repeat," said Barron, "that I cannot save the overseer's house. The fire has it gripped remorselessly."

"Let it go. Who cares? Not I! That is Jacob Gowers' business."

"Where is he? Where are all the slaves?"

"Don't you know? Gower was a Tory in the time of war, and fled the country to avoid the anger of his neighbors. His property was confiscated by our government, but he has lately paid money and secured it again. I suppose he thinks resentment will die out against him so he can return. All the slaves were sold long ago, and I have lived here with only one man to do the cooking. Daniel Goff has his home in the town beyond and manages business."

The name of Goff fell on Barron's ears with familiarity. He recalled him as a man who had come to the mansion with Gower.

"Who," he asked, "are you?"

"I am known as Isaac Lamb, though Wolf would fit me better. I wish—I wish I had lived a different life."

"Be cheeful!" Barron urged. "You shall have a doctor—"

"He would come too late. My hours are sped. Look ye, sir, I had time to think as I lay in that hall, tied up by my foot, and my thoughts were those of a dying man. Ah! if I had lived a better life."

"Did you come here with Gower?"

The caretaker's voice had grown weak, and there was such plain evidence of mental distress that Barron had gained hope that he could learn something to his advantage. His last question was far better fitted to draw out information than he would have thought possible. His companion stirred into fresh acivity.

"Did I?" he echoed. "I have followed at Gower's heels for many years. I was a young English lad when I first met him, the cabin boy in the ship British Yeoman; and when she was wrecked I was picked up by the pirate barque Red Talon. Gower was her captain, but he then called himself Seagulf, and he was a famous freebooter. He saved me from the plank to have me as a waiter, and I grew content and served him like a dog. I was with him when he retired from the sea, after nearly all his men were slain in a battle with a warship; I was with him when he changed his name to Jacob Gower and located in Virginia as a ship-broker; I was with him when he came here. Daniel Goff and I always followed his fortunes, and that is why I lie here now with my soul lost and about to take its last plunge."

Barron had heard with eagerness that thrilled him through, and with hope that, so intense was his emotion, brought a stifling feeling to his throat.

The dying man was talking, and he could tell much if he would. Barron had a question ready, but as the last words fell the speaker reached out and grasped his arm with unexpected strength.

"Look you!" he added, "I want your good offices. Will you bear a message to a wronged man?"

"If I can. Who is he?"

"This great plantation should never have been Seagulf's. He stole it from Clayton Barron and his heirs. Clayton was a fine, gentlemanly, honest man, but he had adventure bred in his bone and it was his undoing. He somehow learned, or so he believed, that a certain island in the Indian Ocean had the treasure of a wrecked vessel upon it—I don't know what island, nor what vessel; and he tried to raise money secretely for the search. He went to Gower who, doing business as a ship-broker, was reputed to be rich, and though he acquired no money, they had dealings so that Gower learned much of his affairs, as well as saw his handwriting. Finally Clayton Barron was said to be dead, and Gower, who was a famous penman, appeared with a mortgage deed, and other papers, and stole this noble property."

Except for the light from the burning building that crept dimly into the cabin the two men were in darkness, and the narrator could not see that Reese Barron's face was moving strangely, and that his strong hands opened and shut as if his emotions were overpowering.

"Can you prove this?" the young man demanded huskily.

"Gower is not the man to leave chance for proof against him."

"You can confess before a notary."

"I shall be dead before a notary can come. I am going fast."

"But is there no document to corroborate you?"

"If there is I mistake Gower's shrewdness."

"And no man?"

"When Seagulf retired from piracy his surviving sailors were all devoted to him, but only three continued in touch with him. There was myself, my real name being Hugh Rood; together with Daniel Goff and Stephen Wade. The latter settled in London, and he was the man who had Clayton Barron sent to Australia as a life convict."

"What?" gasped Reese.

"Didn't I tell you that? Then I forgot. When Gower found himself so situated that he could steal the property here by forging as I have told you, it was necessary to have Clayton Barron out of the way. He was in London, trying to raise money there to finance his plan as to the island treasure, and Stephen Wade undertook to get rid of him. I don't know how it was done, but Barron was convicted of some crime that Wade lied upon him, and was sent by the British Government to Australia as a life convict. I suppose he is there now."

The ebbing voice had grown very weak, and after the closing words Rood lay still, gasping. By his side sat Reese, his mind a field of wild agonizing emotions. The loss of Winfettle Plantation became a secondary affair, for his father's fortunes stood foremost. Wronged again and again, and finally sent to the convict camps in the bush for life! It was staggering, maddening, and the whirlwind of horror and hate was buffeting the listener's brain until he could hardly keep his position.

After a pause Rood's hand again sought his arm, but this time more feebly.

"Promise me!" he urged. "Promise!"

"What? You have not told me."

"Clayton had a son Reese, then a mere lad, though he must now be past twenty-one. That boy should have Winfettle, and I would have it so. Where he is I don't know, but you must find him and tell him all. Promise me that he shall know."

"He does know, for I am Reese Barron!"

Rood started, glared excitedly and tried to rise, but fell back with a gulping sound that reminded his companion of the death rattle. A whisper stole thinly from his lips.

"Young Barron here?—you?"

"Yes."

"Thank heaven you have heard! Now, go your course for vengeance. Go! Seek Seagulf—"

"Where is he now?"

"Traveling abroad; I don't where. He has made his home in London, or near there, but I think he is touring the sea coast countries somewhere—Seek him, and seek Stephen Wade and David Goff. When you are avenged remember that I was not the worst of that old piratical crew, for I was only a lad when Gower took me into his service. Boys cannot see the difference between an honest man and a crafty villain. Seagulf led me into crime. I was not the worst. Still, I was one of his favorite men, and now I lie here, dying. What a death for such a man as I was!"

There was reason to believe his mind wandered somewhat now, but Reese had doubted no part of his revelation. Believing, he was filled with thoughts, so tumultuous and so many that he did not know which point most forcibly demanded his attention. Hugh Rood lay dying, and there was none but himself to listen to the tale that would do so much if properly attested to by a notary and disinterested witnesses.

He had seen so many men pass from life during the late war that he could read well now, and it did not occur to him forcibly to try and get the notary. Rood was near his end.

He seemed presently to fall into a semi-stupor, but was interrupted by keen pain and he opened his eyes.

"It grips me shrewdly!" he muttered. "Still it will soon be past, and so shall I. A strange death for such a man as I! We were a jolly crew, the men of the Red Talon; for all was not sack and violence. Seagulf was said to be the most merciless pirate that ever sailed the seas, but when no other ship was in sight, he often unbent, for he could be as mild as a woman. Ay, and as smooth and oily of speech, while his face was velvet-like and bland; so he often beamed benignly upon us all, only to fly into riotous passion when plunder was at hand or a man of his own crew disobeyed him. A rare man was Seagulf, and I was one of his followers. Long have I been proud of it, but now—now—"

Again his strength waned and he ceased speaking. A moment he lay silent, after which he whispered feebly.

"Water! I need it sorely."

Barron saw a pail and dipper near, and he took them and went out to visit the well-remembered well. His movements were hardly more than mechanical, for the tumult was still in his mind. All his plans for the future had been changed, and he was looking forward to a long, hard effort to recover his rights and avenge the Barron wrong.

Even in that time of agitation he felt that his first duty was to seek his father in the Australian bush, and free him, if living, from the convict camp. After that he could attend to Jacob Gower.

He had filled the pail when sounds of wheels warned him that somebody was coming. It was not his wish, just then, to meet too much publicity, nor to be seen by any man until he was sure he was trustworthy, so he moved into the shadow of the plantation mansion and waited.

The sounds drew nearer and the carriage appeared. Two men soon leaped out and stood surveying the burning building. No one would then have dreamed of trying to save it, for the time for that was long past, but after a time they called the name of the caretaker. Possibly he had strength to answer audibly, and they entered the cabin. One of the two had been a stranger to Barron, but not so the other. He remembered seeing him with Gower, and knew that he was Daniel Goff.

For a short time the ex-soldier's only regret was that he was prevented from being near Rood in the crisis of his ebbing life, but something more came after and brought dismay. Rood's repentance had unquestionably been sincere, but his mind was wandering now.

Would he, in his witless babblings, make it known that he had confessed? Worse yet, would he tell that Clayton Barron's son had been there?

If so, with Goff to hear him, the enemy would be forwarned and ready for Clayton's avenger.

He was about to move near the cabin and listen when the second of the newcomers reappeared and began to walk slowly about and look as if to see that the fire did not spread to any of the adjacent buildings. All this was perhaps, natural enough, but it shut Barron off from acting the listener, and gave him a suspicion.

The man was an honest-appearing person. Had Goff sent him out so he could not listen to Rood's wanderings?

Unable to act as he wished, the ex-soldier fell into deep thought. Already he was planning the future.

"I will first go to London and learn more of the charge against my father, and then to Australia, to see if he has survived his unjust sentence. It's a long trail, but there shall be no tiring. What if I meet Jacob Gower on the way? Wherever I locate him there will be a harsh settlement between us. He shall be punished, and as severely as he has struck at the Barrons. My life shall be voted to that righteous work!"

CHAPTER III.

IN DOUBTFUL COMPANY.

The full-rigged British ship Royal Oak, from London for Cape Town, was in the Indian Ocean. Off her deck the water was rising and sinking in heavy swells, for a violent squall had but lately beset the deep and its outraged bosom was slow to sink into calm. Yet, the Royal Oak was trim aloft, for she had the tonnage to ride wildly-pounding seas when properly handled, and that handling had been hers when the squall drove.

In the cabin all the twenty passengers were gathered, and one of their number was at the table with ink within reach and a pen in his fingers. All hands except himself looked at the sheet of paper before him, but it was as yet unspotted. He, a large, expensively-dressed man with a smooth, smiling face was scanning his companions.

"Of course," he was saying, "we do not want anything like absurd flattery. We unanimously feel that Captain Ray did wonderfully well in the outbreak of nature, and we want to tell him so, but he is a hardheaded, practical man who would scorne fulsome praise. Now, if anybody would put our sentiments into words I would write them down."

"We leave all to you, Mr. Piper," interrupted a pasenger.

"Ah, ah!" murmured that gentleman, "I fear I shall make a mess of it. I compose so indifferently."

"Go ahead, sir, go ahead. Nobody else can equal you."

"Well, well, friends, if I must, why, so be it."

And Mr. Piper dipped his pen and wrote.

"I wish, Mr. Barron," remarked a new speaker, "that I could spread ink with equal fluency."

"All men have not the same gift," replied the man addressed.

"No, nor all gifts—that is, unless it is Mr. Piper. He seems at home with all things and all trades, even with the ocean. Why, when the squall was coming he stood by my side and anticipated the captain's orders by full half a minute, telling me just what Ray would do next, and he did it. But then, Mr. Piper learned this when at sea in his private yacht."

He who had been called Barron made no reply, not seeming to be in a responsively exuberant mood. Indeed, he was grim and somber of face, and one would have thought he was in some trouble had not that grave, almost morose mood been his ever since the ship left London. Never discourteous, and never positively unsocial, he nevertheless displayed no lightness of heart, even when the sun shone its cheeriest and the Royal Oak plowed her way the most gallantly.

The skillfully-handled pen raced across the paper two score of times, and then Mr. Piper ended his labor and read. It was an expression of gratitude and thanks to Captain Ray, and the most captious could find no fault with the terms of the writer. When it had been fully approved its author endeavored to get consent to his plea that he should sign last, but he was overruled, and the first signature to go down was handsomely written—"Mark Piper."

Others followed, male and female, until only two remained. One of the two affixed his autograph clearly, though formally, as Reese Barron, and then there was a call for him who remained backward. He was a tall, slender but sinewy man of middle age, with jet black hair and eyes, and an olive skin. He had been leaning against the bulkhead, not idle of appearance, but supremely at his ease, and as indifferent, it seemd, as the inanimate bulkhead, itself. Waving a long, narrow hand carelessly he advanced and took the pen.

He wrote himself down as Zorr Rogel.

"Now," pursued Mr. Piper, "let us all go to the good captain and present it to him in sight of the sailors. The British mariner, my friends, is the personification of all that is noble, brave and trustworthy, but this is an excellent opportunity to teach the foremast hands anew that devotion to duty is a lofty and beautiful trait."

They went, and as the presentation speech was not shirked by Mr. Piper, he prolonged it so gracefully that it was possible he forgot his surroundings and fancied himself on a lecture platform.

Rees Barron cared little for all this, and he went to the lee waist and leaned upon the bulwark. There, Zorr Rogel joined him. They were two of the five remaining passengers who had come all the way from London, Piper and others having come aboard at Cape Town.

"Tiresome!" commented Rogel briefly.

"Yes," Barron agreed, "but the occasion is unusual."

"And Piper is a Britisher. He has his way."

"I see little sign of English blood in him, either in his speech or manners, though he surely is beefy."

"It is hard to guess one's nationality. Now, Mr. Barron, what would you say as to my ancestors?"

Rogel smiled good humoredly, but Barron, running his eyes over the man's peculiar face, was serious with the impress of uncertainty.

"Frankly, I can't say."

"Malay, Hindoo, Arab, Italian——"

'Even with you to aid me at guessing, I don't know."

"Neither do I!" replied Rogel, laughing lightly. "I rarely dip into the bucket of my personal history, but this much I will tell you. Long ago a small infant was picked up off a barren shore, adrift on a crude, miserable raft to which it was tightly tied. It was cared for, and so grew to manhood. Those who saw the infant were at a loss to guess its nationality, and, in giving it a suitable name they had no clew. They saw fit to call it Zorr Rogel, though I don't know why."

"And that infant was you?"

"Yes."

"In a way you are fortunate. No scheming relation can pluck you."

"Possibly they plucked me early in life. Maybe I was heir to vast estates or much treasure."

Barron's eyes lighted up a trifle.

"Are you seeking that treasure in the Indian Ocean?"

"Hardly! Mines are not numerous here."

"There are islands. Do vessels never go ashore?"

"Yes, with merchant goods, but treasure—well, if I knew of such a thing I might dig, but I should need a guide to reach it."

"The Atlantic coast of America has numerous legends of lost treasure. Has the Indian Ocean none?"

"As I've told you before, I've sailed into every port on the globe worth mentioning, and that means that I've crossed all oceans, but I recall no legend of treasure in this sea."

Barron's face fell slightly. Perhaps he had reasons for wanting to hear of such a place, but, if so, his lead had failed.

The presentation speech was over with, and other passengers joined the two men in the waist. There was no more talk then about treasure.

It was many weeks since Rees Barron heard Hugh Rood's confession at Winfettle plantation. He had not seen Rood after the coming of Goff, but he had stood secretly by the man's grave and wished that more time had been allowed him in which to ask questions. Various things remained unsettled, and these were vexatious, but he had heard enough to start upon his quest.

Sailing to London he had learned that Stephen Wade had died two months before. Here was a check, for he had resolved to see him, but it was too late. In another way he was more fortunate. He found that Clayton Barron had been arrested charged with burglarious assault in a suburban house, and there was nothing to show that his unfortunate father was not still living, a convict in the Australian bush.

As Rood had said, the chief witness was Stephen Wade, and the fact was good evidence of Clayton's innocence. He then tried to understand the evidence, but failed to penetrate the web that had enshrouded his father, so he turned to his original purpose of first seeing the convict, so as to get the truth.

Thus far the son had sailed in the Royal Oak. It had been a long and tiresome voyage, and, being averse to sociability, he had made no real friends among the other passengers.

One of their number, Zorr Rogel, had, at the start, been as retiring as himself, but he had gradually shaken off his taciturnity, and for some time he and Barron had engaged in conversations that had not been unpleasant to the avenger. Rogel was intelligent, and his wide acquaintance with all maritime ports made his talk worth listening to.

Despite this, the American had always been more fond of solitude than human company. Naturally a man of few words, he brooded almost constantly over the wrongs of his family. Matters had gone hard with the Barrons. Of the lesser evils, he had been twelve years deprived of his birthright, and when he drew his sword for his country, had long suffered in a military prison. But his father—the false charge, the life sentence and the nefarious plot back of it all, these things brought out all his somber inclinations, and he had been blind to the comforts of the well-found ship and the alluring brightness of sunny days and sparkling seas.

Better was he suited with the half-gale wind that drove the ship onward swifty, and with the raging squalls that were so much like his troubled spirit.

Zorr Rogel had walked away and taken a new position by the taffrail when Piper joined him. The latter was bland of face, and as he lingered he frequently motioned toward the swelling outboard or up at the white breasts of sails, but his voice had been lowered cautiously and he spoke of neither.

"You have been talking with Barron."

"Ay, ay, captain."

"Drop the title. I am only a plain citizen now. Remember that."

"It is hard," replied Rogel, with a sidelong smile, "to remember the commonplace. I easily recall the Red Talon, the masterful Seagulf——"

"Drop it, fool!" growled Piper. "Did Barron say anything of moment?"

Not a thing."

"Your work must not be long delayed. The Indian Ocean is wide, but it is possible to wait too long. You sailed from London with work to do, and it must be done. Barron seems to tolerate you, so, when the right time comes——"

"Exactly!" and Rogel smiled slightly. "A dark night, a sudden push, ah! it will be a little like the thrills of old times. Trust me!"

A passenger was approaching, and Piper nodded and moved away.

CHAPTE IV.

THE ALARM.

It was the following day, and Barron sat on deck with a lady by his side. Piper was not traveling alone, and his wife had a maid whose name was Miriam Lee. The maid had a pleasant position, for her mistress, though absurd in many ways was never exacting, and Mr. Piper gave his employe the same suave treatment he bestowed upon all others.

Miriam found but little company aboard of her own age, and as she had rece'ved a favorable introduction to Barron from an old acquaintance who had come in the ship from London, she naturally admitted him to her company with a degree of freedom suited to the circumstances. She had found him a gentleman, and often an interesting associate, though a good deal of a mystery.

Regarding youth as the time for gayety, she wondered why he was so strangely grave when by himself, and why his sociable moments rarely passed geniality and his smile never deepened into a laugh.

Barron had wondered less. Conscious that he felt more light-hearted when with her, and that even sight of her at a distance on the deck was agreeable to him, he never wondered why it was so. He was in the grasp of a ruling and all-powerful passion, and the human beings about him were merely incidents in the panorama of life. He bestowed scant thought upon it, and his mental vision passed far beyond. It reached Sydney, and then roved on to some indefinite point in the Australian bush, seeking a convict camp, seeking to pick out one certain man who toiled under and unjust sentence.

And while that picture haunted him he could see nearer objects but vaguely, and even Miriam was like a dream, though always pleasing to his mind when he could detach his thoughts from his consuming passion to wreck vengeance upon Jacob Gower.

On this day he was yielding a little more than usual to the gleaming, caressing sunshine and the pleasing ways of his companion, and his smile was not forced.

"It is now," Miriam was saying, "only a matter of days when we shall reach Sydney. I have never been there. Have you?"

"No."

"Yet you have been a sailor."

"In a way. I never sailed in a merchantman, but, as I admitted to you once before, in a privateer during the wartime. Two years of that life brought me experience, though I fear Captain Ray would hardly consider me an able seaman. I was more a soldier afloat than a mariner."

"I am not so certain that you are lacking, Mr. Barron. Now, there is Mr. Piper, whose sea experience has been limited to pleasure trips, and largely in yachts; yet he knows every plank, mast and rope in a ship, and how best to handle a vessel in calm or storm."

"I surely have not his knack."

"Why," asked the girl, smiling, "don't you take lessons from him?"

"I don't know," answered the American slowly.

He did not know. The idea was new to him, but, having it presented, it did not appeal to him favorably. Somehow, he did not like Mark Piper, though his reason was obscure. The bland, easy smile and the smooth, amiable voice and manner did not attract Barron. He had no intention of supplementing his sea knowledge from any teacher, but, oddly enough, the idea of being in Piper's company long enough to learn from him was productive of inward shrinking.

"I dare say," Miriam resumed, "that your mind is entirely upon what you will do when we reach Sydney—for I understand that you are not traveling for pleasure?"

"I am not," Barron agreed promptly, and she noticed that his lips shut tightly after the reply.

"And you will be a stranger there?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Piper is well acquainted in Sydney, and he is a ready helper for all who are in need," she added suggestively.

"I hardly think I will trouble him," Barron stiffly returned.

To change the subject he sent a look aloft, whereupon Miriam took a new tack.

"I have noticed that you often glance that way. Pray, Mr. Barron do you fear another squall?"

"I am merely wondering why Captain Ray has doubled his lookouts within the last twenty-four hours."

"I had not noticed—but it does seem so. Even for this big ship the watchers are numerous. I wonder why?"

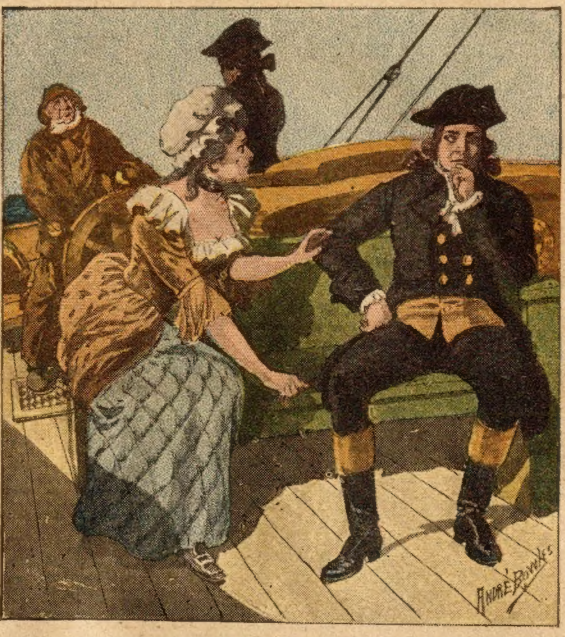
"Not because it is a time of war, for there is none that Great Britain need worry about."

"Nor do remote gales require it. It really is odd. I am no sailor, but I know that lookouts are stationed to watch for danger—that reminds me. Have you heard of a pirate in these seas?"

"No. Have we one?"

"So it seems. Captain Ray admitted as much to Mr. Piper, and I chanced to overhear their talk, in part. It seems there is a pirate ship called the Sweeping Broom, because it carries a real household broom lashed somewhere forward, and very conspicuously. Her captain is named Duke, and he is a terrible, bloodthirsty creature who knows no such word as mercy. Now I recall the talk, it seems that Captain Ray said the buccaneer made a practice of lying in the path of merchant vessels and plundering them."

For the first time her mind fully grasped the significance of her own information. Previously, it had seemed absurd to suppose the Royal Oak, almost a floating world in herself, a vulnerable object, but if the pirate was not more powerful than armed merchantmen he would not dare to attack as he had. A shiver crept along her figure, and she eyed Barron as if grasping for reassurance.



"I had not heard of the Sweeping Broom before."

"I had not heard of the Sweeping Broom before," he answered quietly.

"Do you think she could harm us? This is a large ship, and we carry several guns, while our sailors are of the best. Dare a freebooter attack us?"

"It is the way of the freebooters, but the Royal Oak is fast, and what she cannot do by fighting she may be able to accomplish by showing her heels. Again, we must be found before we are assailed."

He was easy of manner, though not light of speech, and Miriam was largely encouraged. Quick as he was she thought she could see many of the qualities of the soldier in him then, and, somehow, the idea came to her that if the dreaded Captain Duke attacked she would feel safer with Barron by her side than with any other defender. Muscular, quick of motion and fearless of look, he would, she was sure, be an adversary few men would wish to meet in time of conflict.

An hour later Barron was reminded of what she had said. Captain Ray had his glass and was sweeping the whole sky-line with slow shiftings, like one who would not fail to bring each minute dot into the field of the glass. The Virginian moved quietly to his side.

"Pardon me, sir," he said, "but are you turning your mind upon the piratical Captain Duke?"

The skipper lowered the instrument and looked at the passenger in surprise.

"Pray, sir," he returned, "how have you heard of the person you name?"

"The Sweeping Broom is no unheard of thing," Barron explained, as if his knowledge was old, "and I am aware that you do not wish to see Duke. Neither do I, for that matter."

"How many of our passengers know that I am having an eye to him?"

"Very few, I think."

"Then I beg that you will not spread the news. It gets upon delicate nerves to know that such a monster is possibly in surrounding waters, and we should soon have hysterics from both female and male people. I have mentioned it only to Mr. Piper, who himself broached the subject. I infer from your own knowledge that the crew have been tattling. They cannot be deceived. Well, as you are a man with courage stamped on your face, I'll admit that I am a trifle worried."

"I assume that you have no direct information?"

"None. All I know is that the freebooter has been far too active hereabouts for the good of the merchantmen. Various ships have fallen prey to him, and his Sweeping Broom is said to reel off the knots like magic. He is merciless, butchering men like stalled oxen. It is said at Cape Town that he is the worst sea monster since the notorious Seagulf."

Barron kept his eyes averted that he might not betray the feeling aroused by the last words.

"Oh! I have heard of Seagulf, though not as one active in recent years. What became of him?"

"Accounts differ," returned the captain. "His vessel, the Red Talon, fell in with a warship and was shot to pieces, together with practically all of his crew. Some are known to have escaped, but whether Seagulf was one of that number is a problem. It has been stoutly asserted that his body was found among the slain, while a rather reliable story has it that he and some of his hands were seen after the fight on the Florida coast, whither they had mysteriously come in a boat. This tale has them nearly famished and lean of flesh, but full of spirit and the devil's propensity for ill doings, for they are said to have sacked a small hamlet and kept up their evil reputations."

"And then?"

"Then they disappear."

"I suppose they lost all their booty when the Red Talon was destroyed?"

"The tale last mentioned places bags of a mysterious something in their boat that are believed to contain treasure. Of course Seagulf would naturally have an island retreat, and if he could reach it, after the loss of his ship, the treasure would await him there. However, I fancy Seagulf is dead now."

Ray raised his glass again, pausing only to bid Barron say nothing to the other passengers about Captain Duke, and then resumed his sweeping of the sky-line. When he closed the glass his manner was composed.

Little did he suspect that his companion could, if willing, add to his account, but Barron, meditating, could well believe that the remnant of the Red Talon crew had reached United States soil alive, and it was easy to understand that the bags had contained treasure that enabled Seagulf to start as a ship-broker. It seemed that there had been no limit to his thirst for money, so he had seized the opportunity for robbing Clayton Barron.

That day it was of the older pirate, not of Captain Duke, that Clayton Barron's son thought most.

When night fell the sky was rather heavily clouded over, and darkness came with that condition where, though the eye could range for a considerable distance, all the outboard water was a dim, vague pall. The last of mist kept the passengers on deck for some time, but they finally drifted away with few exceptions.

Barron remained. Recent conversation had not tended to lighten his mind, and he had a fancy for solitude, but when the deck was cleared of idlers Zorr Rogel came to where the American leaned against the bulwark. He wanted to talk, and kept close by Barron's side, so he was not rebuffed. Another hour passed, and a change came. Barron had been vaguely conscious of a stir aloft, but it was a complete surprise when sailors moved about extinguishing the deck-lights.

"What does that mean?" he asked, wonderingly.

"Face outward, squarely abeam," Rogel answered. "Now look your keenest. What you do see?"

"Darkness. What more is there?"

"If you had the eyes of an old mariner you would see a far-off light twinkling like a low-hanging star. Captain Ray's lookouts have reported it to him, and now he puts our vessel in total darkness."

"To escape notice. Why?"

"Because he is prudent. Yonder light may shine from Captain Duke's pirate ship!"

This extremely interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very dramatic happenings. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once. Every family should take the Ledger, as humor and stories and pictures make life brighter and pleasanter for all, bringing health and entertainment and doing every one good. Be wise and attend to this today.

* * *

Real Friendliness.

When people asked Mrs. Hobart which of the two Lombards she liked the better, she was always prompt to reply. "I like 'em both first-rate, but Miss Dorothy's my favorite, because she's so common. Miss Mary is different."

"Common!" echoed the summer boarder to whom Mrs. Hobart first made this statement. "What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean common," repeated Mrs. Hobart with firmness, "like folks. What else does common mean, I'd be glad to know? One day they came to see me together, and I hadn't more'n sat down with 'em before I heard something on the stove sizzling the way they do when they've got all but to the top and are just ready to surge over. I said, 'Excuse me a minute,' and ran, for I don't let things boil over on my stove, not if 'twas kings and queens in the sittingroom.

"When I came back, they sat here, looking pretty as roses, both of 'em. And Miss Mary said, in that sweet voice of hers, gazing out over the hen yard, 'What a pleasant view you have, Mrs. Hobart!'

"Now that was real society tact, I s'pose, for the window she'd chosen don't command any view beyond the hen yard but the barn. But Miss Dorothy, bless her little heart, looked right at me, with her eyes all twinkly, and she said, 'O, I hope it didn't boil over, Mrs. Hobart,' and I felt at home with her right off."

* * *

A Fussy Beast.

Such supplies as the two friends did not bring with them to their mountain cottage were procured at the little country stores. Returning one day, the vacationists were seized with a longing for something more than their regular simple fare.

"Let's get some cheese and some crackers and have the stickiest, most creditable welsh rabbit we can make!" cried one.

The others agreed to this, so they halted at the little store and roused the proprietor from his nap on a bench at the door. They followed his lumbering footsteps into the building and told him that they wished a pound of cheese and some large square crackers for a welsh rabbit.

The old man tapped his wrinkled brow reflectively.

"Got the cheese all right," he said, "but hain't got no square crackers. Won't yer rabbit eat the small ones?"

* * *

Urgent Orders.

Murphy was a new recruit in the cavalry. He could not ride at all, and by ill luck was given one of the most vicious horses in the troop.

"Remember," said the sergeant, "no one is allowed to dismount without orders."

Murphy was no sooner in the saddle than he was thrown to the ground.

"Murphy!" the sergeant yelled when he discovered him lying breathless on the ground, "you dismounted!"

"I did."

"Did you have orders?"

"I did."

"From headquarters, I suppose?"

"No, sor; from hindquarters."

The "Cub's" Choice;

Or, THE LADY OR THE SCOOP?

By George T. Hargreaves

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CHAPTER V.

A SECRET DISCLOSED.

HASTINGS, waiting for a response to his knock, was seized anew with a desire to run away. The flood of embarrassments crowding in on him seemed too imposing to face.

"Come, come, you coward," he taunted himself, "brace up and try to be a real reporter."

When a man-servant with a wide expanse of white shirt front swung back the door, Allen gripped himself and asked with as much assurance as he could force into his voice:

"Mr. Baker at home?"

"Yes, but busy and cannot be disturbed," was the response.

"But I am on a matter of great importance," insisted Hastings and he crowded his way into the vestibule.

"I am sorry, sir," repeated the servant, "but Mr. Baker left explicit orders that he could see no one else tonight."

"So the gentlemen have come, have they?" asked the "cub," sparring for time in which to develop some expedient.

"What gentlemen, sir?"

"Why, Mr. Baker's banking friends, of course."

Hasting's chance shot evidently struck a bull's-eye, for the servant blinked in a puzzled way.

"I'm sorry, sir, but Mr. Baker's orders is positive. He can't be seen," the man finally announced.

"But this is a matter of the most pressing importance," persisted Hastings.

The reporter's earnestness impressed the servant.

"Go tell Mr. Baker I must see him," kept on Allen; "that it is almost a matter of life and death."

"Well, I'll take your card up," the man said hesitantly, "but I'm sure I'll get combed for it."

"Let me write a word or two," said the "cub," and he pushed his way into the great wide hall of the mansion, but dimly lit by a soft-toned electric globe. He seated himself on a richly carved seat of precious wood and drawing out a card inscribed in pencil on the back:

"Imperative. About the bank."

As he watched the servant stalk down the richly rugged and tapestried hall and ascend the wide stairway to the second floor, Hastings murmured to himself with the trace of a grin on his face:

"I wonder what Armstrong would say to this exhibition of a gentleman?"

Then as he realized the necessities of his situation, his brain fairly ached with the intricate problem suddenly thrust upon it.

What if Banker Baker should consent to see him? How could he, a confessed reporter and inexperienced, too, hope to get any information from a powerful and subtle banker about an affair which he wished to keep secret? He decided he was foolish to try to get any facts in that way. Very likely he would be ordered turned out of the house.

Yet he must learn something of what was going on above stairs. The Star must know and so must he if he was to serve Mabel Carrington. And there was but one way to learn what he was after. That was surreptitiously. His keen pride revolted at the suggestion, but necessity appeared to demand action of a questionable kind.

His expedient was formed almost as quickly as he realized its need. He glanced toward the stairway, but the servant was not yet in sight. He gently opened the outer doors of the house.

"He'll think I've gone away without waiting," muttered Allen to himself. Then with light step over the soundless rug he darted down the hallway and deep in its darkened inner end squeezed himself out of sight behind a heavy hanging of tapestry.

He heard the servant descend the stairs and advance solemnly to the front door. Through a slit in the drapery which concealed him he saw the man start suddenly when he discovered that the caller had disappeared. Then he poked his head out of the front doorway and came back with his brow a puzzled frown after closing and bolting the doors.

Allen shrank back within his retreat as he noticed the servant glance down the hall toward where he stood concealed, shake his head in bewilderment, and then retrace his way up the stairs.

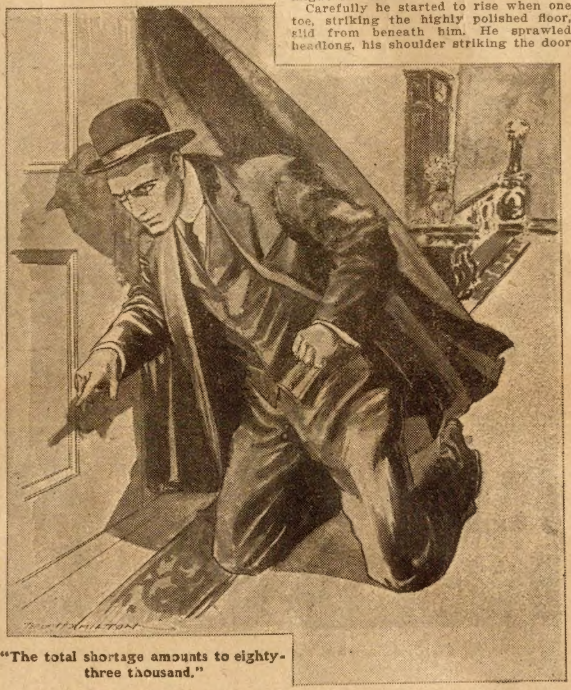
The "cub" breathed more freely. He felt sure of a few minutes' respite. But the crux of his task still lay before him. He had still yet to fathom the mystery of the bankers' conference. And he realized he hadn't much time in which to effect the purpose of his bold invasion of the Baker mansion.

On tiptoe he stole out from his hiding place and hurried along to the foot of the stairway. Here he paused an instant to listen. Only the subdued hum of many voices reached his ears.

"The conference in full blast," he thought to himself.

With one step, a pause, another step, a pause, he made his way up the stairs. Halfway to the top, he was able to scan the second floor hallway from end to end. The crystal chandelier which illuminated it showed it was untenanted.

Hastings crawled to the stair top with more confidence. There he paused to listen again. It was easy to pick out the apartment in which the conference was being held. It was the room forward to the right from which issued the rise and fall of animated conversation.



"The total shortage amounts to eighty-three thousand."

Before the door was suspended a heavy velvet hanging. Tiptoeing along the upper hall, Hastings drew himself cautiously within its folds, assuming a position that enabled him to apply an ear to the keyhole.

His heart was pounding so loudly at this juncture that it swallowed up the sounds from within the conference room. But when, with one knee bent, he calmed himself, he was able to hear each word spoken quite distinctly

"The total shortage, therefore, amounts to eighty-three thousand dollars, all taken within a period of four months," came a strident voice what called up to Hastings' imagination the figure of some pale-faced and shoulder-rounded accountant.

Then, like a smothering blow in the face to Allen, came the heavy but strained tones of a big man:

"Carrington was the last man in the world I would have suspected. I thought him the most trustworthy one we had."

So, his worst fears were confirmed, the "cub" thought, as he pressed his ear nearer to the keyhole that he might not miss a single syllable. Mabel's father was really an embezzler. And for eighty thousand dollars too. Horrible! What would that poor girl do? And what could he do for her?

He felt cold perspiration breaking through his forehead. He thought in a flash how the night city editor of the Star would gloat over this story. It would insure Hastings a steady job, he knew.

But— and the thought threw him from chill to fever—what untold misery that publication would bring to the girl he loved!

Was ever an aspiring "cub" in such a dilemma? such a crisis?

In his plight, a deep, stern voice, calm and deliberate, which he imagined to belong to the bank magnate himself, said:

"One thing I must insist upon in this matter. That is the most absolute secrecy. In the present financial stress it would be folly to let the public know that we have suffered a loss of eighty thousand dollars through embezzlement. Nervous depositors would start a run that might cripple one of our institutions and close the doors of others less fortunate. Remember, therefore, gentlemen, this must not leak."

Hastings instantly decided that it was time for him to get out. He had heard enough to make a newspaper story and the last remark indicated that the conference was drawing to a close. He must flee the house before it ended or he might be discovered.

Carefully he started to rise when one toe, striking the highly polished floor, slid from beneath him. He sprawled headlong, his shoulder striking the door with a resounding impact.

Before he could scramble to his feet, the door swung open and a half-dozen surprised financiers circled about him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BANKERS' QUIZ.

A half dozen angry hands, closing on Allen's collar and shoulders, dragged him to his feet.

"Who are you, anyway?" was fired at him from all directions.

The "cub" did not fail to note that every face glared at him suspiciously, fiercely. It was useless to attempt to escape. His way to the stairs was barred and the grips that held him were unbreakable.

There was but one expedient for him. He must brazen the situation out. He shook himself as if he resented the violence being shown him.

But his attitude brought no leniency from his captors.

"Who are you, sneaking in here like a thief?" greeted him again from all sides, accompanied by a vigorous jostling. Then from one of the party came the query:

"Do you know the young man, Baker?"

The man addressed, powerful, red-faced, steel-jawed, looked Hastings over with a piercing eye before he growled savagely:

"Never saw him before. But bring him in."

Hastings was hauled into the elegantly furnished, brilliantly lighted conference room. Dazzled for an instant by the richness of the apartment, he did not fail

A SPOON SHAKER

Straight From Coffeedom.

Coffee can marshall a good squadron of enemies and some very hard ones to overcome. A lady in Florida writes:

"I have always been very fond of good coffee, and for years drank it at least three times a day. At last, however, I found that it was injuring me.

"I became bilious, subject to frequent and violent headaches, and so very nervous that I could not lift a spoon to my mouth without spilling a part of its contents.

"My heart got 'rickety' and beat so fast and so hard that I could scarcely breathe, while my skin got thick and dingy, with yellow blotches on my face, caused by the condition of my liver and blood.

"I made up my mind that all these afflictions came from the coffee, and I determined to experiment and see.

"So I quit coffee and got a package of Postum which furnished my hot morning beverage. After a little time I was rewarded by a complete restoration of my health in every respect.

"I do not suffer from biliousness any more, my headaches have disappeared, my nerves are as steady as could be desired, my heart beats regularly and my complexion has cleared up beautifully—the blotches have been wiped out and it is such a pleasure to be well again." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

* * *

Misunderstood.

The verger of a large church, seeing an old woman in one of the seats reserved for some important persons, beckoned to her to come out. But just at that moment the organ started playing.

The old woman, never having been in a church containing an organ, startled him and the congregation by calling, "Ha, man! get somebody younger; my dancing days are past!"

* * *

Free Asthma and Hay Fever Cure.

D. J. Lane, a chemist at 115 Lane Building, St. Marys, Kansas, manufactures a remedy for Asthma and Hay Fever in which he has so much confidence that he sends a $1 bottle by express to anyone who will write for it. His offer is that he is to be paid for it if it cures, and the one taking the treatment is to be the judge.

* * *

Arithmetically Speaking.

Johnny had just finished scratching a sum in the surface of the new sidewalk when his father arrived on the scene."

"What is this I see in the cement?" demanded the irate parent.

"Those, father," replied the youth, "are concrete figures."

* * *

DIABETES

Quickly cured with the wonderful tropical herb, Diabetol. Gives relief from first dose. To prove, will mail week's supply for 25c. Booklet free. F. M. Ames, Box 100B, Whitney Point, N.Y.

* * *

Misapprehension.

She—Why was the engagement broken off?

He—Well, after taking the girl to dinners and theaters, giving her costly presents and a birthday gift of a motor car, her father accused me of amusing myself at her expense.

* * *

TO WOMEN WHO DREAD MOTHERHOOD!

Information How They May Give Birth to Happy, Healthy Children Absolutely Without Pain—Sent Free.

No woman need any longer dread the pains of child-birth, or remain childless. Dr. J. H. Dye has devoted his life to relieving the sorrows of women. He has proved that all pain at child-birth may be entirely banished, and he will gladly tell you how it may be done absolutely free of charge. Send your name and address to Dr. J. H. Dye, 200 Lewis Block, Buffalo, N. Y., and he will send you, postpaid, his wonderful book which tells how to give birth to happy, healthy children, absolutely without pain; also how to cure sterility. Do not delay but write today.

* * *

Consolation.

With a sigh she laid down the magazine article upon Daniel O'Connell. "The day of great men," she said, "is gone forever."

"But the day of beautiful women is not," he responded.

She smiled and blushed. "I was only joking," she explained, hurriedly.

* * *

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

(Continued from page four.)

to note the turn of the key in the door behind him. Retreat was cut off.

Banker Baker, at whose will all Wall street crouched, stalked before the disheveled reporter. Every member of the party fixed him with glowering eye.

"Well, sir, who are you?" demanded the financier. "The truth, too, and quickly, or I'll turn you over to the police."

Allen summoned every last atom of bluff and looked the banker calmly in the eye.

"You should know, sir," he said in an aggrieved tone, "you got my card a few moments ago."

"But I sent back word by John that you were not to be admitted, that I could not be seen."

"But I was admitted just the same," replied the reporter, though without any idea where the answer would lead.

"Admitted, when I ordered you not to be?" Then turning to a tall, sedate gentleman near the door he went on: "Paulding, press the button for John and admit him when he comes."

The wait was marked, by an uneasy silence. The only move was the lifting of cigars to mouths, a few short whiffs and their nervous removal.

The servant John came in haste. Admitted, he was the same wooden individual as when he met Hastings at the door. But when in the middle of the standing group he beheld the reporter, his eyes bulged as if about to pop out of his head.

"John," began Banker Baker, "this interloper claims you admitted him to the house. We found him eavesdropping at the door here a moment ago."

John gagged for a bit before he could frame coherent speech. Then he stuttered lamely:

"Yes sir, I let him into the hall until I could bring his message up to you."

"But didn't I order you to take back word that I could not be seen?"

"Yes, sir," mumbled the servant, "but when I got back downstairs, the door stood open and he was nowhere to be seen. I—I thought he had gone away."

"And then?"

"Why, then, sir, I—I closed the doors."

"Yes," fumed the host, "closed the doors with this fellow hidden inside. A pretty piece of work. You may go."

The door had scarcely closed and the key been turned on the crest-fallen servant before Baker again faced Hastings. This time his bitter anger showed in the heat and insolence of his words:

"Well, young man, have you any explanation to make before we turn you over to the police?"

"You read the message on my card, did you not?" asked Allen sturdily.

The banker picked up the card from the table where he had tossed it and read aloud: "Allen Hastings. Imperative. About the bank."

A muttered exclamation of surprise ran about the room.

"I took it for what it really is, gentlemen," explained the banker, sweeping the circle of tense faces with his beetling eyes, "a newspaper trick to reach me. This fellow is a reporter—and a mighty clumsy one."

The circle of financiers shuffled uneasily. Their faces took on an added expression of worry.

"Why imperative?" demanded Baker, turning again to the "cub", "and about what bank?"

"Why, the Nineteenth National," responded Allen in a matter-of-fact way.

"What about the Nineteenth National?" snapped the banker angrily.

"Why, your head teller, Carrington, is eighty-three thousand dollars short—" responded Hastings as though he were stating something well-known.

Banker Baker gave a grunt of derision.

"Bosh," he declared bluffingly, "all bosh. Where did you hear that nonsense?"

"From two sources," said Hastings firmly.

He could read complete confirmation, too, in the startled faces that closed him in.

"Two sources?" quizzed the spokesman. "What are they?"

"First in the Star office."

"And where else?"

"Right through the keyhole of this door," blurted the reporter, waving his hand toward it.

Every face in the group overspread with chagrin, the host's most plainly of all. He studied Allen's words with a frown for fully half a moment. Then he said convincingly:

"You heard wrong, young man. There's nothing the matter with the Nineteenth National."

"Well, I guess the Star will be mighty glad to print what I overheard just the same," Hastings responded boldly.

"Oh, I guess you wouldn't undertake to deny the story on oath in court," said the reporter. Encouraged by the evident effect of his answers, a wave of secret elation at his daring feat swept through him.

He was emboldened further when Mr. Baker drew the entire party to the front end of the room and held a whispered conference with his colleagues.

Hastings made use of the wait to glance sharply about the room. To the rear a broad door opened into another apartment. It flashed upon him that he might make a break for liberty through it, but gave up the idea when he decided that he would be quickly cornered in the mazes of the great house. There were plenty of windows along the outer side of the apartment but none of them stood open. At the front, however, beyond the whispering group, was a window whose flapping curtain showed that it was open to the night. But before he had time to consider what use he might make of it, the conference ended and its members spread themselves about the room.

Banker Baker approached Allen with less severity in his face. His voice, too, showed conciliation when he said:

"Now, Mr. ——"

"Hastings, my name is, sir," volunteered the reporter.

"Mr. Hastings, please be seated for a few moments. I have a few words to say to you at the suggestion of these gentlemen."

Allen sank into the easy chair pointed out to him in the middle of the room and tried to look calm though his heart was bounding tumultuously at this new turn.

Mr. Baker took a seat directly opposite the "cub" and, clearing his throat, began haltingly:

"Now, Mr. Hastings, we are willing to admit that there may be a slight basis of truth in these wild rumors you say you have learned in the Star office. We can't conceive where the Star got them, but we are sure that only the Star knows them. Yet we are exceedingly anxious that they do not gain publicity."

The banker paused, ran his great red tongue about his lips and went on slowly:

"You see, Mr. Hastings, it would be a very dangerous thing for any such stuff to be published. It might start a senseless run on the Nineteenth National that would spread to every other bank in the city. And financial affairs just at present are in such delicate shape that untold harm might result to business. Even a panic might be started."

Hastings gave a short nod of acquiescence that encouraged the banker to go on more confidently:

"Now, you would be serving a very good purpose if you should go back to the Star office and report that there is absolutely nothing in the rumors of any—embezzlement, that Paul Baker says so. If you can agree to do this, why, we would be very glad to reward your service with a hundred dollars."

Mr. Baker thrust his hand into an inside pocket, drew out a fat morocco wallet, picked a yellow bill marked with a huge "C" from its depths and extended it toward Hastings.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ESCAPE.

The reporter's first inclination was to laugh outright. The remarkable change in the attitude of the distinguished group about him had wrought such a change in his position. Five minutes ago he was being accused of housebreaking. Now his accusers were like suppliants, craving pardon at his hands.

But he was promptly sobered by the realization of what the banker's extended hundred dollar bill actually meant. He straightened in his chair, thrust his hands smartly into his outer pockets and with an incredulous frown exclaimed:

"A bribe?"

Banker Baker laughed raucously.

"No, no," he responded testily. "Simply a little evidence of our regard for a discreet young man."

Allen shook his head decidedly.

"No, sir, I can't take it."

The group looked disappointed. The spokesman with a faint grimace in his iron face drew a duplicate of the bill he had offered the reporter from his wallet.

"Here, I'll double the offer," he said assuringly, "here's two hundred for the service."

"Please don't, Mr. Baker," expostulated Hastings with a faint smile. "I'm only a poor young man."

"Come be wise in your time then," urged the banker, almost thrusting the money into Allen's pocket. "All your fellows do it."

"No," the "cub" blurted, shaking off the banker's hand, "I tell you I'll not take it."

Back somewhere in his brain floated a picture of the acclaim with which even Armstrong would hail him when he reported with this tale. Then, clouding that picture out came one in which apparently only the sorrow-stricken face of his sweetheart. The two left him almost in a quiver. The banker must have taken the sign of emotion as an evidence of Hastings' weakening, for he promptly added three more yellow backs to the couple in his hand and, shaking them gently before the "cub's" face, persisted:

"Come, now, here's five hundred, all yours for your promise to forget at once everything you claim to have overheard here tonight and to report to the Star office that I say there is nothing in the rumor they have heard."

"But that would be a lie, now, wouldn't it?" flashed back Hastings.

"Oh, come now," expostulated Baker, "be reasonable, young man. I have paid reporters like this a score of times for similar services."

"Well, you won't pay me that way," declared Allen, his jaw setting like a steel trap.

Even as he spoke his fingers clasped over the remnant of the weekly salary he had received on the previous afternoon. There was not more than twelve dollars in the roll. And he needed money so badly.

"I warn you, sir, that your refusal will make the consequences very serious for you," said the banker with a vigorous nod of the head.

"Well, I did not come up here to sell myself," returned Allen, his voice for the first time showing that, easy-going, long-suffering and jovial-natured as he was, he still had a temper.

From beneath the lowering brows of the financier darted a glance of anger. His associates, too, with nervous movements and hard eyes, showed their displeasure at the way things were proceeding.

"Now, see here, young man," said the banker closing his fingers on the bills he had offered to the reporter and shaking his fist close to the "cub's" face "we've tried to treat you far better than you deserved. We are making you a most liberal offer. We want a satisfactory acceptance."

Hastings got up slowly out of his chair, looked toward the door and then, turning his eyes squarely into those of his tempter, said coolly:

"If that is all, Mr. Baker, I think I'll be going. I'm afraid if I remain we'll both be losing our tempers."

The banker was so astonished at the reporter's attitude that for a moment he stood speechless. Then as he looked almost helplessly about at the equally astounded group of his associates, he bit his lips in chagrin.

"That is not all, young man," he finally blustered, "and let me tell you that you'll not be going until we are well ready to let you go. So, sit down."

Hastings calmly resumed his seat. Boldly as was the front he showed, he was inwardly at a loss how to extricate himself from his present dilemma. So long as the conference insisted on his remaining, he saw no way to circumvent them. Yet he longed to get once more out into the open air and have the soft summer night breeze brush away the tumult in his brain.

"Now, see here, young man," resumed Mr. Baker with a threatening eye as he slowly replaced the spurned bills in his wallet," since you don't seem amenable to reason—and much as I regret it—we will have to employ force. For which you have only to blame yourself."

Then, turning to one of his guests, he said with staccato emphasis:

"Breen, go to the telephone and call up the Ninetieth street station and have them send a man around here at once."

Allen got to his feet in a hurry as Breen made for the door.

"Hold on a minute," the "cub" cried. "Let's see about this."

Baker, believing that the reporter's move indicated surrender, motioned Breen to stay.

"Are you calling a policeman for my benefit?" asked Hastings.

"Exactly," snapped the master banker.

"You're making a sorry mistake," said Allen quickly for he felt that to be locked up in a cell at that hour of the night would ruin all his prospects.

"How so?" blurted Baker.

"You have no charge to make against me."

"No charge against you? Isn't sneaking through a rich man's home in the night sufficient ground for calling you a burglar?"

"But I didn't break in, I was regularly admitted. And I haven't stolen anything."

"Well, I guess we can make the charge stick, just the same," said the banker defiantly.

"Besides if you have me locked up, it won't take me half an hour to get your whole story to the Star."

Every face in the group reflected the look of renewed chagrin on the face of spokesman. Allen, elated by the second checkmate he had played on his gray-haired opponents, could barely repress a grin of satisfaction.

"Well," declared Baker as if announcing a finality, "there is still a place where we can lock you up and keep you a prisoner without any chance of your story breaking out until we have had time to get the whole thing fixed up."

"Where's that?" queried the "cub" in surprise.

"Right here in this house," answered the banker with decision.

"Not much, you can't," exclaimed Hastings and bolting and squirming beyond the reach of the astonished group who were too amazed to do more than thrust out their hands, he darted toward the front window he had seen open, poised his hands above his head as though preparing to dive into the sea and plunged headforemost through the swaying curta'·.

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Ben Sheldon's Love;

Or, A SCOUT OF THE PLAINS

By Ella Martin

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CHAPTER VI.

BEN FINDS THE CAVERN.

ON leaving Harold at the wagons, Ben Sheldon, the Scout, made his way cautiously on horseback to a place where the cave he had cognizance of was located. Here he hid his steed behind some boulders, and began his search for the entrance to the cavern, which, if he remembered rightly, was hidden behind a clump of bushes. He pushed his way through the thicket, and putting forth his hand touched the boulder which served for a door, and to his surprise it swung easily aside, as if it had been recently opened. He entered and let the great stone slide back to its place. Then he lit a match and looked about him. A pine knot lay on the stone floor at his feet, and using this for a torch he explored the place thoroughly. Then he rode back to camp for some provisions, as has been stated.

After he had fixed things to suit him, and while it was yet night, he repaired to the village of tepees. Like a thief in the night he descended upon the sleeping camp and stealthily made his way to the tent in which he knew Myrtle was kept. She was now a willing prisoner, and therefore, probably unguarded.

Not a soul was in sight, and not a sound save the chirp of insects disturbed the still August night. He paused at the rear of the lodge and listened intently. He imagined he heard deep, regular breathing within, and congratulating himself that she was asleep, he entered the place. He meant to kidnap the girl, if he had to gag her, and bear her to the cave, and afterward escape with her on horseback and overtake the caravan.

The act might bring on a fight with the Indians, but there was no help for it. He would try to be out of the immediate country before the redskins learned what had become of their captive. Silently he crept to the place where he knew the couch of skins to be.

What if there was some one on guard, after all? a savage who would spring upon him before he could accomplish his purpose? But the silence was intense. It could be felt—and Ben declared afterward it could be heard. He reached out his hand and touched the couch of skins, then started back in surprise, as he felt nothing but the furs of which the couch was composed. Fearing a trap he sprang to his feet and lit a match. A moment it flickered, then flared up, showing him the whole of the interior of the tent. He quickly threw the match to the ground and set his foot upon it. The lodge was empty.

He glided outside and hid in the shadows. He still feared some snare had been set for him. But as nothing happened, he concluded he was mistaken.

"Now, of all strange things!" he muttered beneath his breath. "Did they suspect my interference and remove her to another tent? Oh has the great chief, Wind-that-Blows already married her?"

There was nothing more he could do that night. He could not make a tour of the tepees and search for her in the darkness without discovery. He must wait another day—must lie hidden in the hermit's retreat till another night, and then watch from the shelter of the trees and learn to which lodge Mrytle was assigned.

But before he left he concluded to take a peep into the lodge of the chief and see if Wind-that-Blows had taken her to his own abode. The wedding ceremonies could not have been celebrated so soon, he thought; still, he should feel better if he just proved to himself that Myrtle was not there.

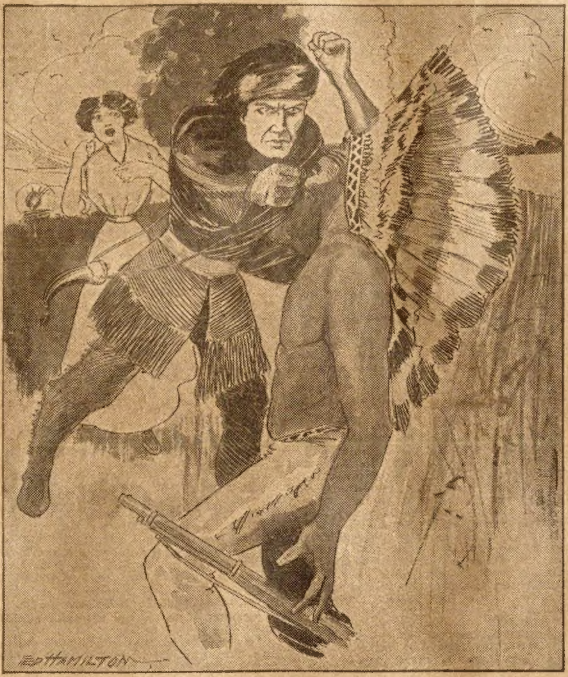
It was a difficult piece of work to accomplish, and he realized the fact; for the dying embers of the many campfires glowed softly among the shadows, now and then flaring up and lighting the night for some distance around. If Fate willed that the flames leap up at the wrong moment he might be discovered by some sleepless eye.

However, he made the attempt and just what he had feared happened. But not until after he had lifted the tent-flap and peered into the chief's sleeping apartment, and by the light of the embers which at that moment flared up and betrayed him, discovered, much to his satisfaction, that Myrtle was not within.

But his presence was made known, discovered to his enemies by that momentary blaze—fanned into being by the night breeze—the only breeze, Ben declared afterward, that had strayed his way since his journey across the plains in the dry, sultry month of August was begun.

The alarm was quickly given, and Ben was obliged to take to his legs. The whole village was in an uproar in less time than it takes to tell it. An intruder was in their midst! An assassin was prowling around the lodge of their chieftain! But by the time the excited redskins had gathered together and expressed their opinion one to another Ben had disappeared from sight in the woods.

A few gave chase, but soon abandoned it, for Wind-that-Blows had called them to council.



Harold's arm shot out suddenly.

"Red men," he began, with as much dignity as his state of drowiness would permit, having just been aroused from a heavy slumber. "Red men, one and all, hear me speak: We are at peace with the whites. Long has it been since my people have put on war-paint and feathers. Long has it been since they danced around the scalp-pole. They are becoming old women from lack of fighting. They fish and hunt and eat the Indian corn the squaws gather. It was well. But now, oh, my braves, see how the white man has broken faith! He creeps into our midst and seeks to slay the chief while his braves are asleep. But for the watchful eye of Red Fox the enemy would have struck.

"Why seeks the white man to harm his red brother!"

Wind-that-Blows ceased, and quietly folded his arms across his breat and waited for his men to speak. Red Fox stepped forward.

"Hear me, oh, chief!" he said. "Your braves are ready to put on the war-paint and feathers at your bidding; they will encircle the scalp-pole at your command, and not one will fail to sink his tomahawk in its trunk. But let me offer a suggestion. The paleface came not to assassinate the chief, but to steal the white squaw—to get back his own."

It will be seen that it was Jack Dutton whom the redskins supposed had been in their midst.

"The white squaw," answered the chief, has placed herself under the protection of Wind-that-Blows, and without her consent she shall not be delivered to her people. She shall be the wife of your chief."

This was said with much dignity, but in the broken English then used by all tribes of the red men.

"Let one of the young men go and bring the white maiden before me," he added. "I will speak with her. Again she shall choose."

It seemed he had no doubt of what Myrtle's choice would be; and gravely he seated himself on a log in front of his tepee while he awaited an audience with his captive-guest.

The young girl had been left with no guard over her, because the whole village believed she was staying of her own free will. But when Red Fox returned the captive was not with him. The chief stood up.

"Speak!" he said.

"The maiden is gone!"

A cry went up from several scores of savage throats—a cry threatening and vindicative. The chief raised his hand.

"Search," he said. "Bring me the maiden before dawn, or let none return until then. And then only to don the war-paint. We will redden the plain with paleface blood. Go!"

There was great excitement in the camp. Fires sprang up in various places, replenished by the hands of the squaws who were anxious that the men should go once more on the warpath. And preparations were made for the scalp dance. The scalp-pole, adorned at the apex with a human scalp, and graven with grotesque figures was erected, ready for the hatchets of those who would thus declare themselves ready and willing to go to war with the whites in defiance of a reckoning with soldiers from the fort.

Meanwhile, where was Myrtle Wayne? Ben, the Scout, did not know; and certain it was she had not returned to the wagons.

The redskins searched throughout the night, and returned not until the dawn had come, obeying the orders given them. The camp of the whites had not been molested. But if our friends had known that from the darkness savage eyes glared at them from all sides their slumbers would have been less profound. The camp was not astir when these watchful eyes withdrew, and so none knew they had been under savage surveillance.

And though the redskins had got no trace of Myrtle they believed she was with her friends—that they had stolen her away while they slept—an insult that could be wiped out only in blood. When they returned to their village they threw themselves down on their couches of furs, weary with the night's search and the lack of sleep, while the squaws prepared their breakfast and made all in readiness for the ceremony of the war-dance.

All this time Ben Sheldon, the Scout, was inside the cavern in the mountainside, his horse stabled in an adjoining chamber. He awoke just at the break of day and began to lay his plans. He would visit the camp of the emigrants before continuing his search for the missing girl, he concluded. He must inform his charges that there was danger of an attack from the savages; for now that he had been discovered prowling about their camp, he had most likely brought down the wrath and enmity of the whole tribe.

"They will follow the trail of the movers I am afraid, especially if Myrtle has escaped and they think she is with her friends. And they will not hesitate to attack, now that they have discovered one of us snooping round inside their grounds. I must overtake and warn them. I cannot leave the rest in danger for the sake of one who has deliberately made us all this trouble; for I owe them safe conduct over the plains and through the dangers besetting their way. But what has become of Myrtle? They would not harm her under the circumstances. And the chief has not taken her to himself yet. I am glad I found that out."

As Ben left the cave in the early morning with the intention of overtaking the wagon train and warning the movers, he thought he heard a slight noise behind the boulder as it slid back at his touch to allow him to pass through. He did not pause to investigate, but the conviction that some one was inside the cave beside himself grew on him the more he thought of it. But other matters soon crowded it from his mind. For about the time the emigrants had got things arranged to their satisfaction, expecting a long wait, the scout rode into their midst.

They all flocked round him the moment he dismounted and demanded to know what he had accomplished.

"Nothing," he said gloomily, "or worse than nothing. If my search for Myrtle Wayne does not bring down the wrath of the redskins upon the camp it will be lucky for us. I was discovered last night in among their lodges, and was searched for throughout the night, I presume."

His words nearly caused a panic. The women gave faint screams of terror; the men cursed the luck that had overtaken them. The two Actkins girls drew nearer and looked at each other. They felt in their bosoms to see if their weapons were safe. But they no longer giggled. The fight they had anticipated in play was likely to become a horrible reality.

"And all on account of that hussy," complained Mrs. Actkins, "a girl we have warmed in our bosom!"

Hattie and May snickered. They knew, none better, how Myrtle had been warmed in the bosom of the Actkins family. Better if she had been left shivering outside, as far as affection was concerned.

"I believe she did it on purpose, she wants to get us all killed," continued the woman.

"You would take her in," grumbled her husband.

"I needed her help, with so many small children to mind."

"Well, two of them are big enough now to help. Put them to work as you would Myrtle if she was here, and let her take her freedom since she wants it so bad. We will move on tomorrow, with or without her."

"Yes, we will move on tomorrow," agreed the scout. "It is not safe to remain longer in the Indian country. I do not feel it my duty to jeopardize the lives of the whole party in a seemingly fruitless search for one who has voluntarily left us. But I think I can rescue her tonight whether she is willing or not. But when once we have her in our possession we must make tracks lively. It will probably be considered by them a breach of the treaty, and will bring the savages down upon us."

"Then let her stay where she is, since it is her wish," snapped the Actkins woman.

Ben looked at her reprovingly, then at her two daughters clinging together, listening with wide eys to the conversation.

"Mrs. Actkins," he said severely, "if it was Hattie, or May, would you still insist on going on?"

Mrs. Actkins was silent, but she had not changed her mind or her feelings. She was too accustomed to looking upon her protege as a little more than a household drudge.

The scout looked over the little party and sized up the fighting men, not more than two dozen in all. And the Indians would outnumber them a score to one.

Over by an old tumbled-down barricade, that had done duty in Ben's boyhood as a partial defense in a fight with Indians Edith Baldwin and Grace Lane were standing, with Harold not far distant. Ben started to join the latter when suddenly an arrow shot from ambush stuck quivering in the sods of the old heap.

A little scream from the girls, and a muttered exclamation from Harold, then the trio discovered that a white rag was fastened to the end of the arrow; but they were at a loss to understand its meaning.

"A flag of truce!" said Ben, the Scout, at their elbow.

At that moment an Indian warrior in all the war paraphernalia of his tribe stepped into the opening from the cover of the trees.

"Ugh!" he grunted.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ESCAPE.

When Jack Dutton abruptly left the scout and Harold Lane at the camp of the movers while the two were making arrangements for the morrow's journey across the plains he plunged at once into the forest and made his way straight toward the Indian encampment. He would take Myrtle out of the hands of the savages dead or alive. His Indian blood was up. He had thought but a moment ago it was mastered forever. But she had refused to marry Ben Sheldon and take advantage of the only way to escape opened up for her. Now it was up to him to see that she did not wreck her whole life because of him.

He reached the wood at the rear of the tepee in which Myrtle had been left alone at her request. She was no longer a prisoner, he knew, the chief, in his calm conceit, having no fear of her escape.

He was about to throw himself on his hands and knees and creep forward to the tent, when a slight girlish figure rose up before him as if it had been at his very feet.

"Jack!" whispered an eager, tremulous voice. And Jack Dutton sprang forward about to clasp the missing girl in his arms. But he remembered himself in time.

"Do not make a noise," he whispered warningly. "for you shall go with me whether you will it or not. I came to rescue you, to take you back to your friends, or to leave you a corpse behind me!"

"Jack!" she whispered again, the horror of what he had said rendering her voice faint and far away.

"Remember, there is savage blood in me," and he drew a long hunting knife that glittered in the moonlight as he flourished it about. Myrtle nearly cried out with fright. Then the humorous side of the situation struck her.

"You surely wouldn't take my scalp, Jack, just because you are quarter Indian?"

"It will be more than I will get of you if I don't," he said savagely. For he meant to frighten her, if such a thing were possible, so that she would come away with him. "It would be some consolation to wear your scalp around my girdle."

"Oh, I don't know about your not getting more of me than just my scalp," she said laughingly. "You are very persistent; and one never knows what one may accomplish." She laughed softly, mischievously.

He seized her wrist and hissed his words between his teeth:

"Myrtle Wayne! do you dare to trifle with me at such a time as this—here in the midst of danger!"

"Danger!" replied Myrtle scornfully, glancing in the direction of the tepees. "Danger in a place like this?—a collection of squaws and an old woman chief, part white. Danger! Bah! I should be ashamed of you if you were not more savage that he, with all the Indian blood you boast of."

Evidently Myrtle had extravagant ideas of what redskins should be, and felt that the present peaceful lot did not come up to her expectations.

"I wonder how Indians ever came to be called braves and warriors," she added, in disgust. "And where is their boasted cunning, to permit a white captive to remain unguarded because she professed to be willing to stay. What calm conceit the chief has! Which side does he get it from—red, or white?" She glanced up at him archly.

"Do you think," cried Jack, "that you can trifle with the chief with impunity, even though he is half white? Beware, Myrtle Wayne if once these savages are aroused every soul in the wagon-train will be in imminent danger."

"Then I had better go back to captivity, you think?"

Jack looked at her calmly—as calmly as he could. The witchery in her dark eyes, the witching smile on her curved, carmine lips enthralled him, and quickened the blood in his veins.

"There is danger to the emigrants any way we can fix it now," he said in an even, tense voice, "unless you do go back and remain willingly, while we go on and leave you there in peace."

He looked at her questioningly, as if waiting for her to take her choice. Her face paled in the moonlight, and gaspingly she clung to him.

"You mean, Jack, that perhaps I had better go back to—to save the rest?"

"I mean that you are to choose freely, now that you are calmer, and more likely to use reason, whether you will wed a halfbreed, a quarterbreed, or Ben Sheldon."

"I will marry the man who loves me, Jack," and her voice sank to a whisper, while her eyes, those starry, agitated depths, drooped to the ground.

With a quick sweep of the arm Jack drew her to his breast.

"Ah, you know who that is, Myrtle!"

"Yes," she breathed, with shyly drooped head.

"Well, then why have you led me such a chase? If you had said yes when you should have you wouldn't be here now; and none of the emigrants would have been in danger."

"Why, Jack, didn't you know I was taken prisoner? I could not help being here. Until you came upon the scene, and I pretended I wanted to stay, I was not left alone one minute. But pray, sir, when ought I to have said yes?"

"Oh, months ago."

"That was before I knew you. And," coquettishly, "I haven't said it yet."

"It is just the same thing—the man who loves you—and I am that man. But how came you to be taken captive? Why did you not scream? We might have heard you."

"I had no chance. Before I knew the redskins were lurking near, a hand was placed over my mouth, and I fainted from fright. When I came to I found myself here, and the chief, Wind-that-Blows, as they call him, had claimed me for his bride."

"And you consented."

"Not until you came, and I saw a chance to deceive them into thinking I was willing. I would not have been delivered to my friends had I so chosen. I had learned that from their talk. But the wagons would have been attacked, the movers massacred and my fate would have been the same."

"So you sacrificed yourself for the others? Do you mean that? You never meant to wed the chief?"

"Wed the chief!" in a tone of disgust. "I would have plunged a dagger in his breast first. Ugh!"

Myrtle pronounced the word with the guttural accent of the Indian, as well as if she had lived among them all her life. It brought a smile to Jack's lips. He placed a hand gently over her mouth.

"Remember," he said, "he is my half-brother, and will be your brother-in-law."

"Half brother-in-law," she corrected, mischievously. "That is bad enough."

Jack looked grave, and pressed her hands.

"I don't think I ought to marry you, after all," he said, meditatively.

"Oh, don't worry about that little Indian blood. I am a bigger savage than you, I'll warrant. Oh, I shall lead you such a life!"

"I believe it. Already you have caused me more trouble than you ought to in a lifetime. Why did you say you loved the scout?"

"Because you accused me of it, and because I knew it bothered you. But I was a little afraid for Ben."

"But you did care for him, once, don't deny it."

"There you go again! Yes, I did, a little—enough to warn him against you. That's how I came to be in the hands of the Indians. But Ben was grateful, he offered himself as a reward for my devotion. But I couldn't think of cheating that dear little Hazel King, the child of his boyhood's friends, out of a husband.

"And you are the man who was the cause of it all," she added "of him insulting me with an offer of his hand without his heart!"

"Hush!" he cautioned, glancing uneasily toward the cluster of tepees. But the savages were all huddled together before the chief's tent, listening to the voice of Wind-that-Blows, which was blowing pretty strong just then, for the halfbreed was arranging the ceremonies of his approaching wedding. Being partly of the white race, he had always longed for a wife from among the palefaces, though many a dusky maiden had looked with covetous eys at the position and man.

"But Myrtle, what were you going to do when I found you stealing away in the darkness?"

"I don't know, exactly."

Jack looked at her keenly. Was she such a good actress that she had fooled them all? Had she never intended to marry the chief?

"I don't know what they will do when they discover your absence," he said. "It is likely their wrath will be aroused, and they will seek vengeance somewhere. But no matter, you can't go back and sacrifice yourself. If there is to be a fight between the redskins and the movers, why then, fight we must."

"But if I am not found in the camp of the whites, perhaps they will not be molested."

"You certainly must not be found there; you would only be recaptured after the massacre was over. I must find you a place of safety. If I can find the cave Ben has told us about, I will leave you there, and go back and take my place on the side of the movers."

"And if you are killed?"

"Then some one who is not must rescue you; I will let them all know where to find you. If we are all slain you can at least wed the chief and be as well off as you expected to be in the beginning."

"I expected to escape if once they would leave me unguarded. It is what I maneuvered for. I intended to follow the trail, and I expected that after awhile the movers would overtake me. But by that time the Indians would have discovered I had not returned to the wagons, and would probably have searched for me in the forest. I meant to go on if I died on the way."

Again Jack regarded her keenly. Was she really and truly averse to a marriage with the chief in the first place? Or had she simply changed her mind about being Mrs. Wind-that-Blows?

"Myrtle," he said, "I can't understand you. I never have, and I don't suppose I ever shall. To me you seem capricious and changeable as the winds of summer. I shall never know whether I can depend on you or not. But I want you and I mean to have you."

"Oh, don't be too sure," Myrtle answered, and turning away, she took the lead in the direction the cavern Ben had told them about was supposed to be located.

But Jack forgot everything, and with one stride reached her side, and throwing his arms around her, he drew her forcibly to him, and kissed her madly, passionately.

Myrtle submitted for one breathless second, then struggling till she freed herself she gasped out: "You savage! The crief himself never attempted such familiarity!"

"The chief does not love you as I do," replied Jack humbly. "All he wants is a white woman for his squaw. Any paleface would do. But there is only one woman in all the world for me. And now that I have tasted the nectar of her lips, I shall not surrender her either to Wind-that-Blows or Ben Sheldon."

"Well, then you had better hide me from them both, for Ben is particularly anxious to win me."

There was bitterness as well as sarcasm in her voice, and Jack saw clearly that the girl was piqued because of the scout's indifference. But whether she had really cared anything for him he could not tell. If so, perhaps it was all over now, and only pique remained. He stood with eyes cast down, a crestfallen look upon his face. Myrtle turned with a swift, impulsive movement and threw her arms about his neck.

"Don't look so utterly forlorn!" she whispered. "I told you I would marry the man who loved me. I now add I will marry the man I love, also."

Jack's eyes were alight as he crushed her to him understandingly. And for a moment they stood oblivious to everything, looking into each other's eyes, each other's hearts. There in the depths of the forest, in the midst of danger, these two remembered nothing but their heart's needs, their heart's passion. Then silently Jack took her hand, and together they sought the hermit's retreat—the cavern in the mountainside.

CHAPTER VIII.

"ME WANT WHITE SQUAW."

When the Indian in all his war trappings stepped into the glade where the emigrants were encamped and drew near the spot where Grace Lane and Edith Baldwin were standing, Harold drew nearer the two girls and stood protectingly over them. But he waited for the scout to speak.

"What does the red man want in the camp of the palefaces?" queried Ben bluntly.

"Me want white squaw!" And Harold fancied his covetous eyes rested on Edith's face.

"Of all the effrontery!" exclaimed Harold. "Well, my friend, you don't get her. You just put that in your pipe and smoke it."

"Indian not smoke pipe of peace until white man has given up captive," replied the savage, not understanding Harold's slang phrase.

"Wait," said the scout, "let us see if it is Myrtle he has come for.

"Does my red brother mean Star-of-the-Night, whom your chief, Wind-that-Blows, kept a prisoner in his village?"

The Indian grunted assent.

"Then listen," continued the scout. "The Star-of-the-Night is not here. We, her people, have failed to find her; if it were not so we would have moved on, and not tarried here among the mountains. It is the palefaces who demand the white squaw, whom you call Star-of-the-Night, at the hands of your chief. I will go before him this night, and demand her of him."

"The Star-of-the-Night is not in the camp of the red men," replied the savage

The men thought the redskin lied, the Indian believed the white men had lied, and that Myrtle was among them, but kept out of sight. Finally, after a good deal of talking at cross-purposes, the scout became convinced that the Indian was too much in earnest in his belief that Myrtle was somewhere among them to be acting a part. It was just possible that the capricious Myrtle had changed her mind and ran away from them and got lost a second time. Here was cause for more worry. If she were lost in the mountains both Indians and emigrants would be looking for her—and then, who knew what complications might arise? There was danger in the very circumstance, and he must send the movers on in the care of Harold Lane. Only himself and Jack Dutton must remain behind; he could not endanger the rest for Myrtle's mad caprice. However, Jack had brought it upon himself; in fact, he was at the bottom of all the trouble which had arisen. But where was Jack? He looked about him and then put the question to Harold.

"He left while we were talking at the wagons, you remember. It struck me that he also went to search for Myrtle."

Ben understood it all now. Jack had succeeded in getting Myrtle, willing or

(Continued on page eight.)

FORCED BY GRATITUDE

of Hundreds to Repeat His Offer of April 8th in The Chicago Ledger.

I have been so moved the past few weeks by the gratitude of Chicago Ledger Readers, that I have decided to make again the offer which I made in the April 8th. issue. This is what I said: "I am going to **Give Away a Free Treatment for Deafness, to every sufferer who asks for it.**"

The letters of request have poured in; letters of grateful thanks have also poured in. From every part of the continent, the people whom I have cured of that terrible affliction—Deafness—are thanking me.

A letter from the Far West says, "Allow me to thank you a thousand times for the good hearing you have restored to me." A letter from New England says, "I bless the day I saw your offer, for you have cured me of Deafness."

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These many letters of gratitude have touched my heart, and so I say again to the readers of The Chicago Ledger: "I will give away a Free Treatment for Deafness to every sufferer who writes for it."

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Send off now, a post card or letter request. Don't delay, or it may be too late. If you have even the slightest feeling that something is wrong with your ears, be on the safe side and **send for treatment.** It won't cost you anything. If you are growing Deaf, and have become discouraged and tired of experimenting, profit by the example of those who have been cured by my treatment. Many of these people thought that they never could be cured, they had tried so many different things which never did them any good. My treatment restored their hearing.

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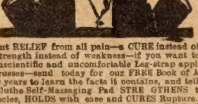

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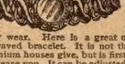

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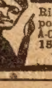

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The Ledger employs no traveling agents to solicit subscriptions, and every person working in that capacity is a fraud. No person is authorized to take subscriptions for the Ledger unless he or she be well known in the city or village where they have been appointed agents to sell this paper every week. A liberal reward will be paid for evidence that will enable us to arrest and convict such persons as are now traveling from town to town in different sections of this country, claiming to be agents of the Ledger and thereby defrauding the people. Beware of strangers.

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The advertising rate is $1.85 per Agate Line per issue. About eight words to a line, 14 lines to an inch. This price also includes insertion of the advertisement in THE SATURDAY BLADE. THE BLADE and LEDGER together have a circulation of

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GENTLE JABS.

A pretty woman cuts a lot of ice with her tears.

And today's aeroplane may be tomorrow's junk.

One way to flatter a woman is to tell her that you can't.

The more temper a man has the more he blames his wife.

It's the same thing over again that makes a revolution.

And it sometimes occurs that marriage is an antidote for love.

Getting married doesn't cost half as much as being married.

It is surprising how popular some people are with themselves.

It's easier for a man to get out of work than out of trouble.

Most of us feel that we could get along nicely on double our income.

Introduce common sense into a love affair if you would break it up.

It's difficult for a rounder to keep in the straight and narrow path.

It's queer how much interest a dignified man can generate in a dog fight.

Probably love laughs at locksmiths because it hold the key to the situation.

Ignorance is bliss when a man has more money than he knows what to do with.

Occasionally it happens that the longer the engagement the shorter is the marriage.

A bachelor girl wouldn't be one if she could annex a bachelor—or even a widower.

A wise man can break into the fool class in a few minutes by talking too much.

A man who breaks into politics isn't necessarily a burglar, but he may be just as good.

Occasionally a man marries for a home, so that he will have some place to stay away from.

The only infallible rule for bringing up children in the way they should go is not to have any.

The distressing thing about a broken engagement is that the girl in the case is expected to relinquish her hold on the solitaire.

You may have noticed that it cost a man a good deal to get in line at the political pie counter in this great and glorious land of the free.

(Continued from page seven.)

unwilling, away from the village, and had hidden her in the cave. And that accounted for the lodge being empty when he visited it, and for the slight noise he had heard behind the boulder when he left the cavern.

It could not be, however, that the redskins were aware of her escape at the time he was discovered prowling around the chief's lodge, but evidently it was soon made known to them. Now he must act and act quickly; for this savage was probably an emissary, sent here to demand the return of the prisoner, and to declare war in case the request was not complied with. He turned to the Indian.

"I see," he said, "we both think the other has a false tongue; we both think the other has her hidden away. Listen: Last night I searched the village of the red men for the paleface squaw. She is ours. If I had found her I should have taken her. But the lodge was empty. Then I feared the chief had already married her, and I crept to his tent and looked in. I meant no harm to the chief, I wanted to see if Star-of-the-Night were within. She was not there, and I thought he had hidden her away in another place. But I could not look farther, for his braves chased me into the forest. Now I see you speak truth. She has gone of her own accord—run away before I searched. She could not find her people, for as you see they have moved from the place where she left them. And she is therefore lost in the woods.

"Come, look for yourself. You can see she is not here. I go to seek her. If red men find her first she is their's (Ben was convinced that she was in the hands of Jack Dutton), if white men find her they take her. Go, tell your chief."

"Indian search first."

"Yes; come."

Ben turned and walked away, but the redskin stood immovable, his eyes fixed upon Grace and her friend. Harold watched him closely.

"Go to the wagons," he said to the two girls, and unquestioningly they did his bidding. He approached the savage.

"The scout is waiting, will you come and search for Star-of-the-Night?"

The Indian grunted, but accompanied Harold. The scout had paused halfway to the wagons and was waiting for them.

"Now search for yourself," he said. But the two men kept close beside him while he peeped into the covered wagons, and in all other likely or unlikely places. At last he was convinced that Myrtle Wayne was not among her people.

"Ugh!" he said, "chief's brother not here either! Ugh!"

Then Ben's brain began to hatch a plot out of the way opened up for it.

"Ah, I see!" he exclaimed, "Jack Dutton has stolen her and returned to the settlement from which we came. He loved the white squaw and will marry her when he reaches the town. He is our enemy, and would not stay with us. The white maiden did not love him; he shall not have her. I will go and seek them, and bring the Star-of-the-Night back with me. The red men will surely not pursue them to the white settlement?"

In his heart this was just what Ben desired, it would give him a chance to send the truants on ahead if he were fortunate enough to find them in the cave.

"Humph! Where they get ponies to escape on?"

"Are you sure you have lost no ponies? Look when you return. But Jack's horse would carry them both." (In truth Jack had no horse).

The scout hurriedly, and with a show of excitement for the Indian's benefit, went for his own horse; but the redskin was not impressed with his apparent anxiety. He still lingered, and finally his eyes sought out the girls who had attracted his attention in the beginning. He went to Edith's side, and pointing his finger at her, said, in low, guttural tones, that frightened all the women within hearing.

"Me take this squaw, Pale Lily. You keep Star-of-the-Night when you find her.

"Not if I know it, you don't" interrupted Harold referring to the first part of his speech. "The Pale Lily is mine! Understand?"

The face of the Pale Lily, otherwise Edith Baldwin, at that moment resembled a red rose. But her eyes were shining, and Grace noted it with pleasure.

"Humph!" said the Indian, "red man come, all of them, kill paleface men and take squaws—this one too."

He moved nearer and placed his hand on the arm of Grace Lane, who shrank back with a stifled scream. Harold's arm shot out suddenly and knocked him flat upon his back. Then he motioned the girls to withdraw from the redskin's sight.

The savage rose, minus his dignity and one or two feathers. He uttered no word, but retreated to the cover of the forest.

The scout had not seen this little byplay, for anxious to impress the savage with the idea that the chief's brother had stolen Myrtle and returned over the plains to the place whence he came, he had not delayed his departure but galloped away while the Indian was there to see him.

"Now," said Harold, as the warrior arose, his mien, if not his feathers drooping, and disappeared in the timber, "now we will have to act lively and prepare for battle for that redskin will bring the whole pack of them down upon us."

He spoke to whomsoever might hear, and walked rapidly toward the wagons. He called the men together and informed them of the danger that most likely threatened the camp. The old barricade was repaired, or rather a new one was built on its runis, and everything done to make the defense as complete as possible.

At length everything was in readiness, and all were prepared for something to happen. And then came a period of tiresome waiting, with an uncertainty that was almost unbearable.

Harold sought out Edith, and sending his sister to the other end of the corral on some pretext, he caught the young girl's hand as she was about to slip away from him.

"Stay, Edith, I love you!" he said eagerly. "You heard what I said to the savage, or I should not have spoken yet. Will you promise to be my wife, dear, and give me a right to protect you?"

"You did it very well without the right," she answered coyly, "when you knocked the savage down. You couldn't improve upon that, Harold."

"Then don't you think I deserve a reward?"

"Yes, but I am not much of a reward, am I?"

He slipped his arm about her waist.

"You are the only reward I want, or ask for. I want you, Edith! Will you be mine?"

A shyly whispered yes caused him to draw her into his arms and kiss her.

"What I told the redskin is true, then. You are mine—you belong to me."

And then Grace came back and interrupted them.

"Spooning! Well, of all things!"

The two drew apart, abashed. But Harold spoke up manfully, while Edith blushed.

"There may have been a more fitting time and place for a thing like this; but it is the first time I have found you two separated. Be a little more considerate in the future, Grace—can't you?"

During this speech Edith slipped away to relieve her embarrassment.

Later the scout rode in among them, and the little party gathered round him. They had not expected his return so soon, because of his avowed intention of following Jack and Myrtle to save them if possible from falling into the hands of the Indians. They had thought at the time he was over-trustful in offering to share his search for them with the savages. Ben's object, which they did not quite understand, was to get the Indians off on a false scent. This scheme worked only in part. For the chief merely sent out his scouts to look for the trail of the fugutives, while he kept his fighting men at home.

These scouts eventually returned and reported that no trace of a trail in that direction had been found. It was during this period of investigation that the scout had crept within view of their village and discovered the warriors at their scalp-dance, dressed in their war-paint and feathers. He then rode to the camp with all speed to warn the emigrants, and to help take part in the fight that it seemed could not be averted. There had been no reason for him to ride with caution, for there was none to note his presence in the country. The runners sent out to look for the trail of the fugitives were all searching in the other direction; and the warriors were engaged in the war-dance, oblivious to every other thing.

He was silent for a moment while the men crowded about him to learn the reason for his early return.

"What news?" asked several in unison.

"The very worst," answered Ben, the Scout, grimly. "The Indians are now at their war-dance, in all their paint and war-trappings. And they are sure to attack us before morning!"

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this strange story. You will find it strong and captivating to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

* * *

Differences.

Judge William H. Moore, at one of the horse show dinners in New York, compared the London and the American horse shows.

"Both are admirable," he said. "There are differences, of course. But these differences reflect neither on one show nor the other. They are necessary differences, like——"

Judge Moore smiled.

"I went into a stationer's shop in London one day and said to the shop assistant:

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"'No, sir,' the young woman answered. 'We try to take in all the papers, but there are so many new ones coming out. Still, I can order Mucilage for you, sir. Which number did you want?'"

"I learned afterward that I should have asked for gum. They don't have the word 'mucilage' over there in England.

"But an Englishman traveling on one of our railways stopped a train boy and said:

"'Have you got a y gum?'

"'No, I don't use it, boss,' the boy replied in friendly fashion, 'but I can let you have a chaw off this here plug.'"

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THE SIGN OF THE BEETLE;

Or, The Mysteries of Chrysalis Street.

By T. C HARBAUGH

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CHAPTER XIII.

A STRANGELY MATED PAIR.

THE hands of various city clocks were denoting the hour of midnight when Marly-Grant let himself into the mansion in Chrysalis street. He had enjoyed himself at the Golden Club and his earnings were considerable, albeit he never played for high stakes. He was feeling at peace with himself and when he had closed the heavy door behind him he proceeded to carry out a little resolution, which was simply a cigar before retiring.

He went to the library and turning on the light ensconced himself in a chair. A box of royal Havanas he drew toward him, and lighting one, he became oblivious to everything that did not give him pleasure. He was a man of steady and exemplary habits, his wine bill was never large, and though he had raced over the greater part of the globe, he had never thrown away much wealth.

He was so engrossed in his occupation that he did not hear a door open softly behind him. A light footfall came across the deep velvet carpet and Marly-Grant was unconscious of his visitor till a hand was laid on his shoulder and he looked up into the face of his wife.

She had not been long from her interview with Mr. Gwin [illegible] the house of the Egyptian room and her face was still a little flushed. That interview had not proved very satisfactory to her.

"Not abed, my dear?" cried Marly-Grant, as the gaze of his better half became fixed upon him. "What is it that keeps you up at this hour? You should conserve your energies for tomorrow night for the reception, but this does not indicate that you think of doing anything of the kind."

Her deep, penetrating gaze never left him for a moment and his face suddenly lost a little color as he removed the cigar from his lips and held it poised in his hand.

"I have waited to see you, Jason," she said coldly and the following moment she took a chair opposite him and continued her searching look.

"Well, Cordelia dear, I am here," he answered with a smile and leaned back in his chair in an attitude of waiting.

Her lips met solidly before she spoke again.

"I made a singular discovery not long ago," she said.

"Ha?"

"Yes, Jason, I have come to ask you who furnished the Egyptian room in the other house?"

Marly-Grant did not start. He was one who had good control over his nerves and seemed a man always on the lookout for surprises.

"You want to know that, do you, my dear?"

"Yes."

"And you never knew of it till lately."

"Not until within the last few hours."

Marly-Grant flicked his ashes into a silver receiver on the table and concentrated his ideas.

Had his wife been to the house just below? Had she found the dark faced man on the floor where he had left him? In the name of wonder, what had taken her thither.

"It was a fancy of mine," he said after awhile. I furnished the Egyptian room. I intended showing it to you when I had completed the adornment to my liking."

"The influence of old Egypt is still about you?" she remarked with the semblance of a smile on her icy face.

"It lingers with one, they say, who has been to the Land of the Pharaohs."

"I should think so from the looks of the room," she said. "But why did you furnish it thus? You might have turned one of the apartments of this house into an Egyptian chamber, but here you go and fix up a room in the vacant house."

He drew a breath of relief, yet a mystery crept into his soul. She had not found the dark-faced man on the floor. What had become of him anyhow?

"Jason," she suddenly exclaimed, "where did you get the idea of those beetles on the tablecloth and on the walls?"

"I saw them in Egypt."

"What significance have they?"

"They are the ancient scarabs and the sacred beetle is sometimes called the head of Ptah."

She did not speak for a moment.

"There is a table in the middle of that room, Jason, and two chairs. Do you ever entertain your friends there?"

"Not often—"

Her figure was suddenly projected toward him.

"I want the truth, Jason," she said, "knitting her brows. "You are up to something mysterious."

"I, my dear?"

"You, Jason Marly-Grant!" she went on. "Do you know what I discovered on the door-jamb leading into the Egyptian room?"

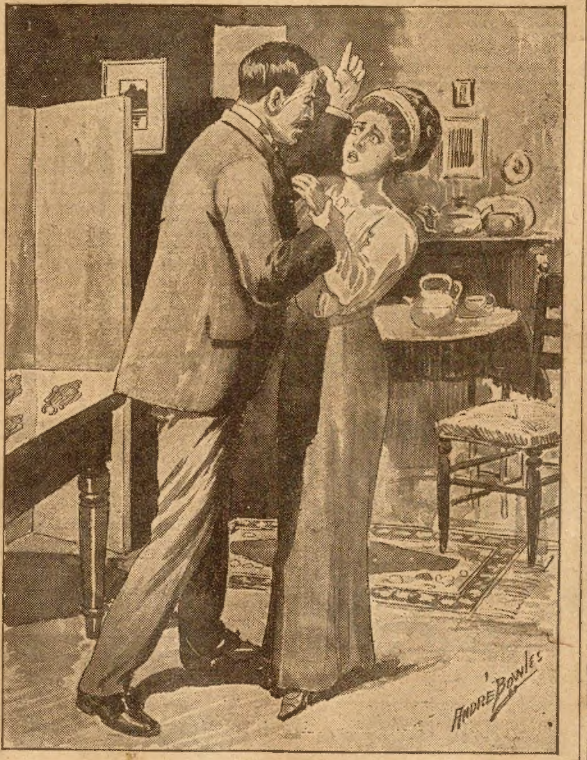
He did not answer, but only looked into her impassive face, wondering in the silence of his thoughts what was coming next.

"It was blood, Jason," she proceeded. "You see I cannot altogether eradicate it."

She held one of her hands toward him and he beheld on the tips of her tapering fingers a stain which sent a shudder to the depths of his soul.

"That's a strange thing to find in the other house."

"Think, Jason. They found a dead man on the Persian rug, another in the grounds attached to the house below. Was the third man killed in the room of the beetles?"



"Swear by the sacred head of the great Ptah!"

What could he say? He knew that his wife's gaze was centered on his face like the gaze of a judge of doom. He squirmed a trifle in his chair and would have given all his winnings for the night if she had not invaded his privacy.

"You need not answer me," she went on, accusingly. "There was the blood of some one on the door-jamb. It came off on my hands, as you see. Whose blood, Jason?"

"Mine!" he said, lying with the sang-froid of a Venetian bravo. "I scratched my hand on something when I left the room the last time and came in contact with the jamb."

She did not believe him and he knew it. He might successfully lie to others, but not to this wife of his.

"When were you in the house last?" she asked.

"Today."

"Jason, you lie!"

His hands gripped the arms of his chair and he pushed his body forward as he glared at the woman who had given him more prominence in the social world than he ever could have secured of his own initiative.

"It will not do," she continued. "Turn about and give me the truth. The two men found dead within a few hours of one another were in some way or another connected in their fortunes. Perhaps you have not seen the last edition of the evening papers. The latest theory is that those men belonged to some secret league, for on the back of each man, so the papers say, was found the tattoo of a strange looking bug resembling a beetle.

Marly-Grant seemed to retreat within himself like the head of a turtle.

"I haven't seen the evening papers," said he scarcely above his breath.

"That is the theory advanced by the journals," she resumed. "I have become interested in these mysterious crimes since Russell, my son, has been arrested for the murder of one. You have ever been reticent concerning your stay in Egypt. I have never been able to draw you out. Those men were not Egyptians, but Englishmen."

"How should I know?"

He was becoming defiant now, just as though he could browbeat the determined woman whom he had espoused.

"Russell never slew the man with the beetle between his shoulderblades!" she accused, sullenly. "He had no excuse for killing him. Oh, I am not pleading for the young man who has disgraced his mother by taking up with one beneath him. I have seen this girl."

"Yes?"

"I told her what was what. She has the courage of a lioness. She met me at every point and defied me. I hate her with all my heart. I could see her strangled——"

"But you're not going to do anything of the kind, my dear?"

"I had her in my power in this house and I let her go. You see how very merciful your Cordelia is."

"No doubt the girl thanked you."

"I felt vengeance burning my fingertips!" cried Mrs. Marly-Grant. "I let her off. But let us get back to the Egyptian room. The blood on the door-jam is not yours, my dear, for your hand bears no evidence of it. Is there a third man with the sign of the beetle between his shoulder-blades?"

The old, defiant light dropped out of Marley-Grant's eyes.

"There may be one, two, three such creatures living," he said. "I have my secrets. Do not seek to unveil them."

(Continued on page twelve.)

AGENTS

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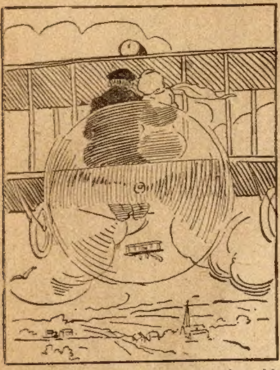


Juliet—Dear, let's fly into that big cloud over there so everybody can't stare at us.

Ill-Assorted.

Father (a few years hence)—No, I'll never consent to your marriage with young Saphead. He's as poor as Job's turkey.

Daughter—Why, he has a whole trunkful of railroad stocks, and you are only a railroad brakeman.

Father—Yes, but his stocks pay no dividends, and I get good wages.

Hard to Please.

Early in the season a man applied at a farmhouse for board, but the farmer slowly shook his head. "I'd be glad to keep you," he said, "but city people are too hard to please."

"I'm not at all exacting," the applicant replied. "You will find no difficulty in pleasing me."

"That's what the last man who came along here said, but it wasn't so. Fact is, nothing pleased him. First he complained about sleeping in a bed with the hired man, and when we gave him a bed to himself in a room with four of the children, he was still dissatisfied.

"Then he didn't like to use the towel we all used, and he wanted a washbasin in his room. Nothing suited him at all. I don't know whether you would be so hard to please or not."

Not Guilty.

Mrs. Leeder—Norah, do you ever repeat anything you hear my husband and myself say to each other when we have a slight difference of opinion?

Domestic (crossing herself) — Th' saints forbid, mem!

Why She Is Nervous.

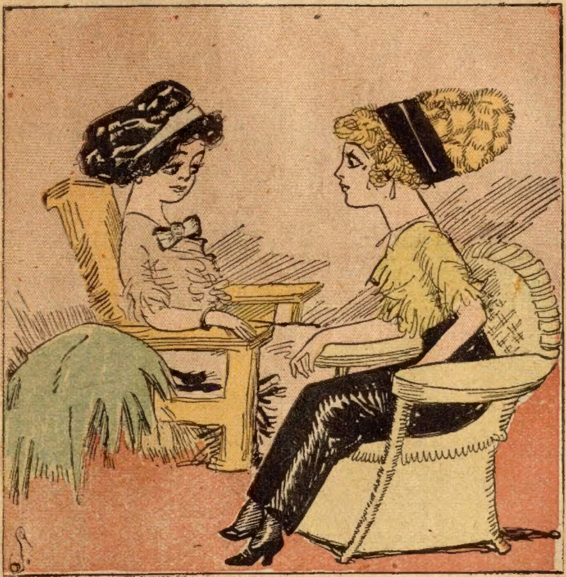
He (at the concert)—Miss Shreeker says she is always nervous when she attempts to sing in public.

She—Well, I'm not surprised. She has heard herself before.

How He Did It.

"Did the millionaire attain his great success in life by burning midnight oil?"

"No; by selling it."



Mazette—You aren't sure Wallie really loves you?

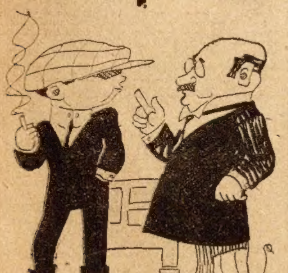
Gracie—If Wallie doesn't love me he must be taking papa's kicks to increase his endurance.

No Capital.

Mr Grumps—The Ladies' Journal says a woman should make herself as attractive to her husband after marriage as she did before.

Mrs. Grumps—Huh! My father always gave me plenty of money to make myself attractive with. You don't

* * *



Pa Munn—Egbert, I never wore a pancake cap and cuffs on my trousers.

Egbert—Why, how could you, when you had to work for $2 a day?

Boudoir Generalship.

Jane—That Mr. Shallopate is at the door. Shall I tell him you are engaged?

Miss Pinkle—Show him into the parlor, Jane.

Jane—Yes'm.

Miss Pinkle—And, Jane, after he lays his box of candy on the mantel, tell him I am out.

Almost Simultaneous.

"Oh, what a shame! I am inexpressibly shocked to hear it. And how soon after your marriage did he begin to display the cloven hoof?"

"Why, at about the same time he began to cultivate the cloven breath."

Somewhat Pessimistic.

"Shad is much like marriage."

"In what way?"

"Both are fine institutions, but sometimes I wonder if either is worth the trouble."

Would Pay Better.

Guest—What do you think of this idea of compulsory arbitration?

Waiter—Don't keer nuthin' 'bout dat, boss. Wot we-uns want is compulsory tippin'.

A Husband's Retort.

She—I will have no smoking in this house. Do you understand?

He—Yes, please extend this prohibition to the stoves.

TICKLISH

A Change.

Husband—You have changed washerwomen, I see.

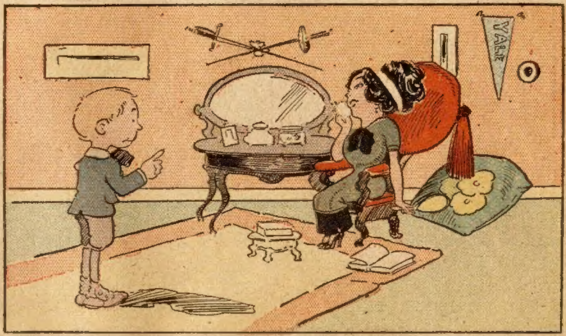
Wife—Yes. How do you know?

Husband—Instead of getting Brown's, Jones', and Robinsons' shirts, I am getting some strange garments I never wore before.

Had Tried One.

Mrs. Wayback (at a dime museum)—Land sakes!—And was that man really skinned alive? Dear me! How did the savages do it?

Mr. Wayback—I s'pose they covered him with porous plasters, Manda, an' then pulled 'em off.



Brother Bud—I didn't know you were one of those athletic girls; look at those foils over your bureau.

Sister Sue—Foils! Why those are my hatpins.

A Little Girl's Grievance.

"Mamma," said little Ethel, with a discouraged look on her face, "I ain't going to school any more."

"Why, my dearie, what's the matter?" the mother gently inquired.

"'Cause it ain't no use, at all. I can never learn to spell. The teacher keeps changing the words on me all the time."

Foxy Dad

"What does your father do when you ask him questions?" asked one small boy.

"He generally says, 'I'm busy now; don't bother me,'" replied the other. "Then when I go out of the room he looks in the encyclopedia."

Excusable Sometimes.

"A man ought to come home in the evening smiling and with a good appetite."

"Yes," replied young Mrs. Torkins, "he ought to; but the home team can't win all the time."

A Shocking Discovery.

"This large bump running across the back of your head means that you are inclined to be curious to the point of recklessness."

"I know it. I got that by sticking my head into an elevator shaft to see if the elevator was coming up, and it was coming down."

Cheated.

Manager—What's the leading lady in such a tantrum about?

Press Agent—She only got nine bouquets over the footlights tonight.

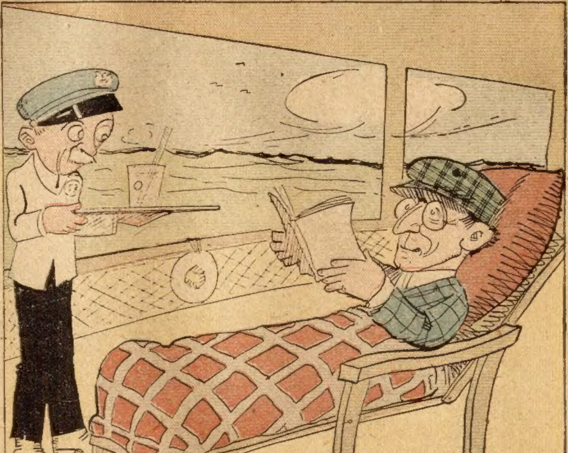
Manager—Great Scott! Ain't that enough?

Press Agent—Nope—she paid for ten.

They Tried It.

Mrs. Borden-Lodge—So you've been boarding with that Mrs. Hammond-Egg. She always pretends that she doesn't keep boarders.

The New Boarder—Quite right. She takes boarders, but she doesn't keep them.



The Deck Passenger—I notice all of the steerage passengers bolt their food. I wonder why?

The Steward—They bolt their food to keep it down.

TACKLES
ELLSWORTH YOUNG

Perpetual Resentment.

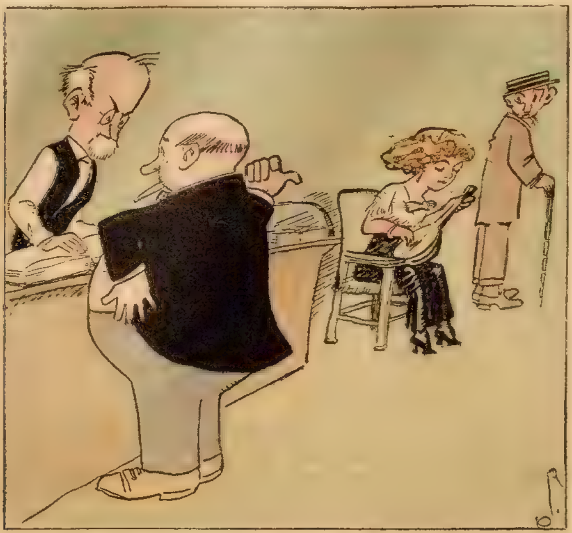
"That [illegible] of yours is constantly changing his politics."

"Yes," replied Farmer Corntossel. "He's one of these people who insist on blaming the administration for the kind of garden seeds his Congressman distributes."

About the Size of It.

"Why is it," queried the youth, "that so many people fail to mind their own business?"

"There may be one of two reasons or both," answered the home grown philosopher. "They may have no mind or no business."



Hotel Guest—There's the blond girl playing the mandolin; I thought you didn't allow Sunday amusement?

Zeke Waller—That ain't amusement; that's punishment.

A Natural Inference.

When Congressman J. Hampton Moore was a reporter in Philadelphia he was assigned one night to go out and get a human-interest story about a woman who had died at the age of eighty-eight, leaving a twin sister with whom she had lived for fifty years, as sole survivors of an old family.

The house stood opposite a cemetery at the outskirts of town, and Moore wished, as he pulled aside the crape to ring the bell, that his city editor wouldn't be so fertile with his ideas of human-interest stories. A woman friend of the aged sisters opened the door and ushered J. Hampton into the parlor, over in one corner of which rested the dead sister in her coffin.

The neighbor seemed to feel it was up to her to entertain the reporter while he was waiting for the other sister to drag herself in for the interview. By way of small talk the woman motioned with her thumb in the direction of the coffin and remarked, "That's the lady that died."

"I suspected as much," replied Moore.

Had No Choice.

"You say you were in a saloon at the time when the alleged assault took place?" a lawyer asked of a witness the other day.

"Yes, sir. I was," the witness admitted.

"H'm," the lawyer pursued, "that is interesting. And did you take cognizance of the barkeeper at the time?"

"I don't know what he called it, sir," came the reply with perfect ease, "but I took what the rest did."

Waiting for an Opinion.

"Now Rastus," roared the major, "what is the use? Don't you know that I know that you are lying?"

"Yassuh," replied Rastus, "but you see, Marse Henry, I kind o' thought I'd like to had yo' opinion on de subject 'fo' I decided dat I was lyin' fo' sho' mahself. Now dat yo' says I is, Marse Henry, I jest reg'larly knows I is, sah."

Got the Money.

Doctor—Well, I'll get my money out of old Neverpay this time.

Wife—You said you never expected to get a cent for treating him.

Doctor—I will this time. His life was insured, and he's dead.

Couldn't Be a Craze.

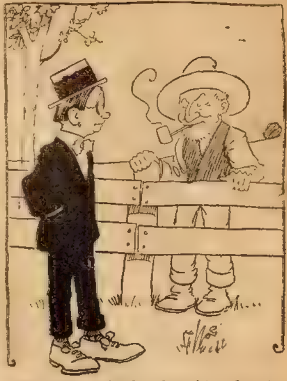
Winks—Your friend Jones is one of the finest pianists I ever heard. Why don't he go on the stage?

Minks—Wouldn't pay. His name is too easy to pronounce.

Probably Not.

"A Nebraska judge gave a harem-skirted woman five minutes in which to leave town."

"Gee! If it had been a hobble she never could have done it."



City Man (who has bought a farm)—Now, if I put in thirty cows could I live on them?

Neighbor—Wal, ye orter live for a year, anyway, by selling two of 'em a month.

Grows in Self-Esteem.

"Yes," mused the party who seemed to be thinking aloud, "I guess that's right."

"What's right?" queried the innocent bystander who had overheard.

"That the farther a man gets away from home the more he tries to exaggerate his importance," answered the loud thinker.

Naval Dream.

Mr. Recentmarrie—Mary, I do hope you will never have navy beans for supper again; those we had last night gave me a terrible dream.

Mrs. Recentmarrie—Oh, John, I am so sorry! What was the dream?

Mr. Recentmarrie—I dreamed I was captured by Capt. Kidd and made to walk the plank.

A Little Too Soon.

Friend—No wonder Miss Beauti won't look at you. It's your own fault. You act like a slave—fawning, cringing, kneeling before her, as if you didn't dare call your soul your own.

Mr. Sadfello—Don't women like that kind of treatment?

Friend—Um—not until after marriage.

Erroneous Impression.

Seymour—I've just lost $100 through Waters, the bucket shop dealer; I thought you told me the fellow was on the square."

Ashley—He is on the square; he's on the northeast corner of it.

Honesty of the Barber.

"Thirty cents," said the barber.

"Thirty cents for a shave!" exploded the recent occupant of the chair. "Why, you have a sign outside the shop that says 'Shaves at half price.'"

"I know I have," admitted the tonsorial artist, "but do you suppose I would be so dishonest as to hang that sign before I had raised my price to 60 cents?"

Two Views.

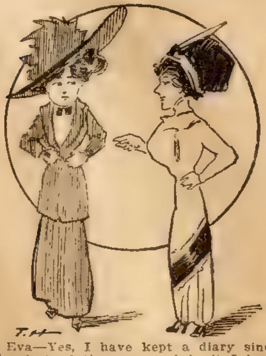
Mrs. Biffers (looking up from the paper)—Of all things! A couple who have lived together for sixty years have applied for a divorce.

Mr. Bliffers—My, my! Sixty years! I don't wonder.

A Bandage.

Little Willie—Say, pa, why is Justice always blindfolded?

Pa—Because she is forever getting a black eye, my son.



Eva—Yes, I have kept a diary since the first of the year and in it I have registered all the spats I've had with Jack.

Edna—You have? Gracious, it must a scrapbook.

No Insomnia Here.

Mrs. Eastside—Now thet you've got so rich I should think yo'd be afraid o' burglars.

Mrs. McSwimm—Sure, I'm not afeared at all, at all. I've sixteen alarm clocks set so that one will go off every half hour durin' the night. Whin a burglar hears one o' them he nivir sthops to take anything wid him.

Mrs. Eastside—But don't they keep you awake?

Mrs. McSwimm—No, indade. It's not us would be waked up by a little thing like that. Before Micky got th' pipe contract I used to be a kitchen leddy, and Mickey waz a policemon, in Philadelphia.

Wise Team.

"My father and I know everything in the world," boatsted, a small boy to a visitor.

"That so?" said the caller. "Where is Asia?"

After a moment's hesitation the youngster answered: "Oh, that's one of the things my father knows."

In Doubt.

"Mrs. Bliggins says his youngest is the image of his father," remarked Mrs. Cayenne.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing. I didn't know whether to congratulate Mr. Bliggins or sympathize with the baby."

Different Valuations.

Some one asked the old farmer what his cow was worth.

"Wall," he answered with a knowing wink, "that depen's on whether she's goin' to be killed by the butcher or the railroad."

Somewhat Different.

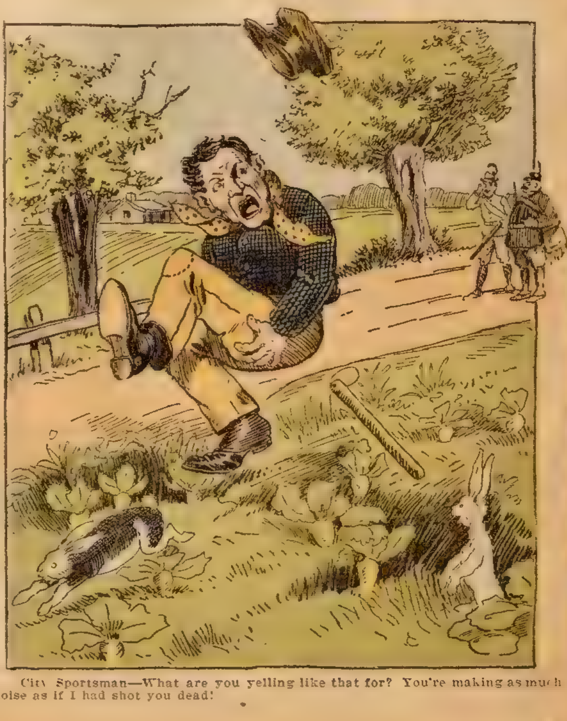
Harker—Didn't I understand you to say he was a tried and trusted man?

Parker—Not exactly. He was tried after he had been trusted.

The Exception.

Post—There are as good fish in the sea as ever were caught.

Parker—H'm! I guess you haven't heard Thompson's latest fish story.



City Sportsman—What are you yelling like that for? You're making as much noise as if I had shot you dead!

The Sign of The Beetle.

(Continued from page nine.)

"But Russell Marly?" she cried. "What is the secret he carries, for you know that he will not explain his movements of two nights beyond a certain point."

"No more!" exclaimed the man in the armchair. "I'm going to bed. Good night, my dear."

He was on his feet and halfway to the door before he heard her voice again.

"Good night," she said, icily. "You lie to me at your peril, Marly-Grant!" and he was gone.

CHAPTER XIV.

KATE'S NEW ADVENTURE.

The following morning with the sun in her face Kate Chalmers stood at the window of her room in Season street, gazing half listlessly into the street below.

The mystery of the night before—the strange figure in the dark grounds of the house in Chrysalis street—was still uppermost in her mind. Indeed, she had not been able to get rid of it for a moment since her adventure. Who was the man and what had he been doing there? If the house was unoccupied what had taken him to the spot? True, it was the scene of the mystery which might cost Russell Marly his life, and that life was the dearest thing in the world to her. She had lost sight of the man as though the earth had opened and engulfed him, and though she had watched some time he had not re-entered her vision.

Now she was fighting the mystery over in the solitude of her room, her soul burdened with Russell's peril and the mystery deepening beyond Mr. Gwin's acumen, as her almost fainting heart told her.

If she could see Russell she would seek him and tell the story of her experience, but she was afraid that they would not let her pass the portals of his detention prison, and she held back.

All at once a figure came into view on the pave below and a little cry leaped from the girl's throat.

A man had passed beneath her and her eyes followed him till he was lost to sight.

Half a second later the room was deserted and she was on the sidewalk. There was something startlingly familiar about the man. Her keen, discerning eyes had connected him with the figure she had seen for a moment in a strong glint of moonlight among the trees about the empty house.

She had reached the sidewalk so quickly that she beheld the man turning into Lennox street but a few steps distant.

With her heart in her throat Kate ran forward and caught sight of the stranger as he mounted several steps of a house near the corner. She watched him as he opened the door and saw him close it with a rapid glance down the street.

Then she recalled the finding of the unconscious form of Julius Gwin on the stones almost opposite that very house and she wondered again.

Was this the man who had throttled the detective in the hallway of that place?

The door was a barrier, granite-like, between her and further discovery. She wondered what her reception would be if she were to knock on that forbidden portal. Would he be found in the hall waiting like a tiger in ambush for her?

Reluctantly the girl turned back.

She went up to her room and once more stood at the window. At once the man passed the house again.

She flew down the stair and out of the house. His back was to her now and he was walking rapidly. Kate threw herself at once upon his trail. He might lead her a long chase, he might carry her across the city, but she would not lose him this time. It might be all for Russell and this man might furnish Julius Gwin with the very clew he wanted.

It proved a long chase. Half an hour later the man ran up the steps of a well-to-do house in a quiet street, but did not tightly close the door behind him. Perhaps he had left it open for the express purpose of entrapping her. These dark-faced men are cunning and this one looked the personification of shrewdness.

Russell Marly's love stood on the pavement debating the most important thing that had entered her mind in years. At length she moved a little nearer the house. It looked like a respectable place, but there is no rule for telling what is good and what is bad from outward appearances.

Some unseen power seemed to draw the girl toward that house. She felt her curiosity getting the better of her; there might be peril beyond that mild looking portal, but was she not willing to undergo anything for the man she loved?

Almost before she knew it she found herself on the steps of that house. Her hand reached out coolly and with resolution born of a courageous spirit and pulled the knocker.

The tingle of the bell had not ceased to sound when the door was opened and she was looking into the thin face of a tall woman whose eyes seemed to read the innermost secrets of her soul.

What should she say?

Kate stepped into the hall before she spoke. She was inside at any rate.

"Have you furnished rooms here, madam?" she asked, plunging at the idea that flashed across her mind

The strange woman regarded her from head to foot. It seemed to Kate that the scrutiny was satisfactory.

"I have but one empty apartment," was the reply.

"Might I see it?"

"Certainly, miss," and the speaker turned and with a gesture invited her to ascend the stair with her.

A narrow hallway ran back from the landing. The woman paused at a door which she pushed open.

"I might let you have this chamber if it suits," Kate heard. "It is modestly furnished and——"

"I don't want anything expensive," interrupted the young girl. "You see my income is not large —"

"Then the room might be all you would wish."

Kate was already inside and was inspecting the chamber with all the cleverness she could assume.

"What's the price, madam?"

"Four dollars per week."

"I'll take it," said Kate resolutely. "There seems to be everything here and I have but little to add."

"When will you come?"

"This very day"

"The room is yours, miss."

Kate took out her modest purse and dropped the first week's rent into the hand put out eagerly for it.

"Have you many roomers?" she asked nonchalantly.

"Only two just now," was the reply. "There is a gentleman just across the hall from this room and another downstairs."

Kate started and wondered.

"The first-floor roomer is out of the city just now," the woman resumed, as though she had penetrated her lodger's thoughts. "I think I heard the gentleman across the way come in a few minutes since."

Kate was right, then. She was to become a roomer across a narrow space from the man whom she had seen near the empty house in Chrysalis street and the person who must have throttled Julius Gwin.

This was either luck or doom, she knew not which. Only the future would solve the riddle.

"I trust the gentleman across the way is not one who will in any manner disturb me," she ventured.

"He's the most quiet person you ever saw," answered the woman with a smile. "He has very odd hours. And when he comes and goes he is as quiet as a mouse. I see but little of him."

"He's an American gentleman, I trust?"

"Seems English to me," was the answer. "But you won't know he's in the house, miss."

Kate smiled at this and withdrew into the hall.

"I'm Mrs. Patten. I'll give you the keys. I never talk about my roomers"

"That's a good quality Mrs. Patten," bowed Kate as she moved toward the staircase. "I'll thank you for the keys."

These were handed to her on the lower floor and she transferred them to her pocket.

"The parlor is yours at all times," volunteered the woman. "You look respectable and I won t ask questions. Ah, Mr. Golden is coming down."

Kate raised her eyes and beheld on the stair the man she had followed. He descended with a sweeping glance at the two women in the hall and, with a silent nod from Mrs. Patten, passed out of the house.

"I think I shall go up to my room a few moments," Kate said, and the next moment she was on the staircase.

She entered her new chamber and closed the door behind her. Then the full force of what she had done burst upon her. What was she really bargaining for? She found a chair near the wall and sat down to collect her scattered thoughts.

Had she not thrust her head in the lion's den? It was not too late to go back. She could leave the house and never enter it again. She could get out of the shadow while there was yet time, but thoughts of Russell Marly held her to that spot with a grip of a giant.

"I'll see what comes of this impulse, be it good or evil!" she exclaimed. "I will go through with this adventure and the blame shall rest on no head but mine."

A few minutes later she emerged from the room and crossed the corridor to the opposite door. Her hand found the handle and she turned it gently. As she thought, the door was locked.

The hall below was cast in shadows and the house was silent. Kate returned to her own room and brought out one of the chairs. She placed it against the door and mounted it noiselessly. The transom was partly open.

Standing on tiptoe the girl placed her face against the framework and looked into the room beyond. For a moment she saw nothing, for the place was cast in semi-darkness, but all at once the entire apartment stood revealed, and with a little cry which would have betrayed her, if there had been listeners, she dropped to the floor with her heart fluttering like a bird at the bars of its cage.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MAN OPPOSITE.

At the sound of knuckles on his door—and a gentle but impatient rap it was—Julius Gwin rose and opened it. Kate Chalmers stood before him smiling.

"You are welcome," said the detective, as he held the door open while she passed in and dropped into a chair near his table. "You have occupied my thoughts more than once since I last saw you."

"That is good of you, Mr. Gwin," replied Russell Marly's fiancee, with a little bow. "I have been doing a little detective work myself."

Julius opened his eyes, but did not speak.

"It came about in this way," and the young girl proceeded and related her newest adventure, how she had seen the man of Lennox street and how she had followed him to the house where she had engaged a room, so as to be able to keep him in sight, for she doubted not that he was the dark-faced one who had throttled her friend, the detective, into unconsciousness.

When she came to her observation from the transom she paused and seemed to take a long breath.

"What did you see in that room, miss?" eagerly asked Julius.

"It was something which may not have flustrated you," she replied, "for you would have been looking for something of the kind, but when I saw the man's tablecloth covered with representations of beetles and remembered what you have told me about the scarabs found on the bodies of the two men so mysteriously murdered in Chrysalis street, I nearly fell from the chair."

"You have found the right man," said Julius. "This is the same person who stole the scarabs from me."

"He called himself the reincarnation of Ptah, did he not?"

"Yes, and said he belonged to the Brotherhood of the Beetle."

"I remember."

"You had a good look at him as he came down Mrs. Patten's stair?"

"Quite a good look. He wears a light patch on his forehead. It is a long patch and I noticed that it extends from the middle of his forehead to his hair on the right side."

A singular look flashed up in the detective's eyes.

"I think I could account for that patch," he observed, smiling. "I heard no sound when the revolver flashed in his face when he confronted Marly-Grant in the Egyptian room of the empty house. The ball did not strike him fair, but must have ploughed its way under the skin coming out somewhere back of his head. That is why I didn't find him when I investigated."

"I may see more of him," the girl proceeded. "I am now fairly domiciled at Mrs. Patten's——"

"But you are in dangerous quarters," broke in Julius. "If that man-tiger should suspect——"

"But how can he?" cried Kate, in the most innocent manner possible. "I shall keep out of his way and will give him no cause to suspect me."

"Then you are really going to inhabit your new quarters?"

"Why not? The beetles on the table interest me and, besides, it may all turn out for Russell's good."

"Ah, Russell Marly!" ejaculated the detective. "I must tell you that I have lately seen him."

The girl leaned forward with her bright eyes a-snap with eagerness

"What does he say now?" she cried. "Is it the same puzzling silence?"

"I got a little more out of him," replied Mr. Gwin. "It was not much, but something."

Kate wanted to ask what he had drawn from the accused lover, but she dared not.

"You remember that he admits being in his mother's house the night of the first murder?"

"Yes, yes."

"And that he was near the empty house two removes from the inhabited one the night of the second tragedy?"

"He went thus far with me," exclaimed the girl.

"I am quite sure that he witnessed both tragedies," Mr. Gwin said with positiveness.

"I have thought as much myself."

"You will remember that Choppy, the butler, as well as the other inmates of the house, declared that they heard no sound?"

"That is what all of them said according to the coroner's report."

"There is no one who came forward with such testimony regarding the second crime."

"That is true, Mr. Gwin."

"Mr. Russell broke the ice of silence in my last interview with him so far to say that he heard no pistol shot at either place."

'But what did he see?" cried Kate.

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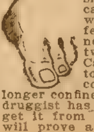

"Ah that is the puzzle," smiled Julius Gwin. "When you come to the evidence of sight he shuts up like a clam."

"And you could not draw him out?"

"It was simply impossible."

"Whom is he shielding? His mother?"

"I think not," replied Mr. Gwin slowly.

"Her husband, then?"

"So far I am at a loss to know."

"But don't you think he knows who committed those dark crimes?"

"If any living man besides the perpetrator knows it is Russell Marly."

Kate Chalmers was silent for a full minute

"Doesn't he realize his position?" she asked at length

"He does and that is what puzzles me all the more."

The beautiful girl rose to her feet, and, in the full light that revealed face and form, gazed in silence at the man in the chair

"I shall see him," she said, resolutely. "If he truly loves me——"

"He does, miss; he worships the very ground you tread."

"But why this damaging silence?"

"That is his secret."

"If kept to the end there is no hope for him." Her words ended with a deeply drawn sigh.

"He will keep it to the end," the detective answered. "He must be saved with that secret locked in his bosom."

"I don't understand men," was the response. "Perhaps it were best our paths had never crossed. But for me he would never have been an exile from home——"

"You need not upbraid yourself," interposed Julius. "The love of Russell Marly is worth having."

A flush came to Kate's cheeks and nestled there rendering her more lovely than before.

"But he is doing such strange things!" exclaimed she. Mr. Gwin, you have never told me that between the shoulder-blades of the two murdered men were tattooed beetles."

"You have read the papers, then?"

"Yes," she admitted. "Is it true?"

"It is true. I saw the tattooed scarabs myself."

What do they mean?"

"It simply confirms my belief that the men belonged to a secret league whose sign is the head of Ptah"

And does not the body of the man across the hall from me bear the same sign?"

"Undoubtedly, miss"

"But the hand that slew——"

"We will get to that point after awhile," smiled the young detective. When we have all the threads in our hands we will proceed to untangle the skein."

She began to adjust her wraps, looking at him all the time.

"If I get too inquisitive, Mr. Gwin," she said, "you will please call me down. Did Russell ever speak about his sojourn in Egypt?"

"But the once, miss. He had a singular experience there."

"If that experience is not for me keep it from me!" she exclaimed.

"Let it be my secret for awhile yet," responded Mr. Gwin gently, and Kate understood.

"Good day, then," she said. "I shall go back."

He looked at her a moment with eyes filled with admiration.

"Since you have deliberately entered the lion's den, keep away from the beast," he admonished and she tripped to the door with a little laugh.

"Trust me for that," she sent back to him. "I know enough about the beetle robber to keep out of his clutches," and with this she opened the door and Julius Gwin was alone.

Russell Marly's love went back to her new abode. The long shadows of approaching night were descending upon the city when she ran up the steps and let herself into the house.

No one greeted her and she hastened up the stair and entered her room.

A moment later she heard the closing of a door and knew that the man who called himself Golden had entered his own room. What was he doing there?

An hour passed and the whole city blazed with lights. The house itself was as silent as a tomb. Not a sound came to the ears of the girl in the room opposite. She went to the window and looked out. For many moments she stood there as immovable as a statue, but with every sense on the alert.

Her thoughts were no longer with Russell Marly but with the man across the way. She fought like an Amazon to beat down the curiosity that gripped her. The man with the scarab ring was within a few feet of her and she would know what he was doing. Slowly she turned from the window and opened the door. The hall was dark, but over the opposite portal a dim light prevailed. Kate stepped into the hall and leaned forward. The very stillness beyond that one door drove her interest to the breaking point.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SIGN OF THE BEETLE.

The one thought most uppermost in the mind of Kate Chalmers was that but a strip of plank separated her from the man who possessed the secret that would keep her lover from the doom that overshadowed him.

She glided across the hall and applied her ear to the polished door. Her heart seemed to stand still in the depths of her bosom.

All at once she recoiled with a cry which never grew into full being on her white lips.

A lock had clicked, clicked in her very face, and horrors! the door had opened.

She was looking straight into the sinister face of the occupant of the room opposite.

The girl could not emit a sound. Her tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of her mouth, her blood ran cold and——"

The next instant a hand of iron gripped her arm and she was being dragged forward.

Across that threshold she went with her bursting orbs riveted upon the strange man whose fingers seemed to burn their way to her bone. He did not speak, but his eyes told everything.

The half-conscious girl heard the door close behind her and the lock snap in its steel cage

In another moment she had been cast into a chair and he was sitting opposite her, looking into her face in silent triumph, while he seemed to be reading her inmost thoughts, if she had any at that time.

"Why didn't you knock, my dear?" he said, sarcastically, as his gaze searched her from head to foot. "I don't have many visitors and one like you is a treat"

Still not a word rippled over Kate's lips

"It was really good of you to come to me," he went on in the same irritating voice. "What can I do for you?"

Kate's gaze roved from his immobile face to the beetles pictured on the glazed table cloth.

"Pretty, aren't they?" he observed, running his long hand over the brilliant little things "You don't see a cloth like that often"

"I never saw one before," Kate managed to say.

"No?"

Her courage suddenly came back to her. Perhaps this man was not merciless after all.

"They are beetles, are they not?" she ventured, and then her tongue left her,

"They are the heads of Ptah," he smiled.

"I do not understand"

"Ptah is the great god of the ancient Egyptians."

"But you are not a native of that country?"

"Heaven forbid!" he exclaimed. "One can have the heads of Ptah and not be of the land of the Ptolemies."

"I presume that is true."

"You have recently taken a room in this house?" he suddenly went on.

"Yes."

"You came from Season street?"

The girl started; then he knew.

"I used to be a neighbor of yours," he resumed. "I was just around the corner in Lennox. I have even seen you in the moonlight."

"Yes?"

"You go about at night, I see. I lost you among the trees. I recognize you now."

The gaze of the discovered girl dropped to the carpet at her feet.

"I did not go there to spy upon you," she said.

"But you were there. I lost you and I don't know where you went. It was not my burning desire to find you," and he laughed again.

"I will go now," and Kate rose, wondering if he would open the door

"Not yet, my dear," he said with firmness. "I have not done with you."

She sank down into the chair once more and waited for him to proceed.

"Who sent you here to watch me?"

"No one," answered Kate, boldly. "I came to this house of my own volition."

"And you will leave this room only when I have done with you."

Her face, which had gained some color, went white again.

He moved his chair nearer hers and his eyes once more sank deep into her soul.

All at once he rose to his feet and took several quick turns about the little room. All the time his gaze was not away from her for a single second

When he came back to his seat he dived one hand into his bosom and threw two green silken bags upon the table

"The heads of Ptah!" he said, as he shook out their contents and fondled the beetles with his hand. "Life and death! Woe and doom!"

Her eyes followed his motions and when he again caught her gaze he leaned forward.

"It's a game!" he exclaimed. "It's a game that had its beginning in the shadow of the pyramids. You have never heard of the Brotherhood of the Beetle?"

Although Kate had heard, she shook her head.

"Beside the great pyramid the league was formed. No, girl, you cannot know. You were almost a child then. It is death for one to try to break from the oath of the Brotherhood of the Beetle"

What a strange man he was. His face dark a moment before, now seemed to get a singular light. His long hand even appeared to shorten, yet she knew that that hand was dangerous.

"I am going to let you out when I am through with you," he suddenly went on.

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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THE DREAM-WOMAN

By WILKIE COLLINS

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HE HAD only done right in believing her so implicitly. She was there, punctual to a minute, to answer for herself. The last left faint defense in Isaac's heart against the fascination which a word or look from her began inscrutably to exercise over him sank down and vanished before her forever on that memorable morning

When a man previously insensible to the influence of woman forms an attachment in middle life, the instances are rare indeed, let the warning circumstances be what they may, in which he is found capable of freeing himself from the tyranny of the new ruling passion The charm of being spoken to familiarly, fondly, and gratefully by a woman whose language and manners still retained enough of their early refinement to hint at the high social station that she had lost, would have been a dangerous luxury to a man of Isaac's rank at the age of twenty. But it was far more than that—it was certain ruin to him—now that his heart was opening unworthily to a new influence at that middle time of life when strong feelings of all kinds, once implanted, strike root most stubbornly in a man's moral nature. A few more stolen interviews after that first morning in Fuller's Meadow completed his infatuation. In less than a month from the time when he first met her, Isaac Scatchard had consented to give Rebecca Murdoch a new interest in existence and a chance of recovering the character she had lost by promising to make her his wife.

She had taken possession, not of his passions only, but of his faculties as well. All the mind he had he put into her keeping. She directed him on every point—even instructing him how to break the news of his approaching marriage in the safest manner to his mother.

"If you tell her how you met me and who I am at first," said the cunning woman, "she will move heaven and earth to prevent our marriage. Say I am the sister of one of your fellow-servants—ask her to see me before you go into any more particulars—and leave it to me to do the rest. I mean to make her love me next best to you, Isaac, before she knows anything of who I really am."

The motive of the deceit was sufficient to sanctify it to Isaac. The stratagem proposed relieved him of his one great anxiety, and quieted his uneasy conscience on the subject of his mother Still, there was something wanting to perfect his happiness, something that he could not realize, something mysteriously untraceable, and yet something that perpetually made itself felt; not when he was absent from Rebecca Murdoch, but, strange to say, when he was actually in her presence! She was kindness itself with him. She never made him feel his inferior capacities and inferior manners. She showed the sweetest anxiety to please him in the smallest trifles; but, in spite of all these attractions, he never could feel quite at his ease with her. At their first meeting there had mingled with his admiration, when he looked in her face, a faint, involuntary feeling of doubt whether that face was entirely strange to him. No after-familiarity had the slightest effect on this inexplicable, wearisome uncertainty.

Concealing the truth as he had been directed, he announced his marriage engagement precipitately and confusedly to his mother on the day he contracted it. Poor Mrs. Scatchard showed her perfect confidence in her son by flinging her arms round his neck, and giving him joy of having found at last, in the sister of one of his fellow-servants, a woman to comfort and care for him after his mother was gone. She was all eagerness to see the woman of her son's choice, and the next day was fixed for the introduction.

It was a bright sunny morning, and the little cottage parlor was full of light as Mrs. Scatchard, happy and expectant, dressed for the occasion in her Sunday gown, sat waiting for her son and her future daughter-in-law.

Punctual to the appointed time, Isaac hurriedly and nervously led his promised wife into the room. His mother rose to receive her—advanced a few steps smiling—looked Rebecca full in the eyes, and suddenly stopped. Her face, which had been flushed the moment before, turned white in an instant; her eyes lost their expression of softness and kindness, and assumed a blank look of terror; her outstretched hands fell to her sides, and she staggered back a few steps with a low cry to her son.

"Isaac," she whispered, clutching him fast by the arm when he asked alarmedly if she was taken ill, "Isaac, does that woman's face remind you of nothing?"

Before he could answer—before he could look round to where Rebecca stood, astonished and angered by her reception, at the lower end of the room—his mother pointed impatiently to her writing-desk, and gave him the key.

"Open it," she said, in a quick, breathless whisper.

"What does this mean? Why am I treated as if I had no business here? Does your mother want to insult me?" asked Rebecca, angrily.

"Open it, and give me the paper in the left-hand drawer. Quick! quick, for Heaven's sake!" said Mrs. Scatchard, shrinking further back in terror.

Isaac gave her the paper. She looked it over eagerly for a moment, then followed Rebecca, who was now turning away haughtily to leave the room, and caught her by the shoulder—abruptly raised the long, loose sleeve of her gown, and glanced at her hand and arm. Something like fear began to steal over the angry expression of Rebecca's face as she shook herself free from the old woman's grasp. "Mad!" she said to herself, "and Isaac never told me." With these few words she left the room.

Isaac was hastening after her when his mother turned and stopped his further progress. It wrung his heart to see the misery and terror in her face as she looked at him.

"Light-gray eyes," she said, in low, mournful, awe-struck tones, pointing toward the open door; "a droop in the left eyelid; flaxen hair, with a gold-yellow streak in it; white arms, with a down upon them; little lady's hand, with a reddish look under the finger nail—The Dream-Woman, Isaac, the Dream-Woman!"

That faint cleaving doubt which he had never been able to shake off in Rebecca Murdoch's presence was fatally set at rest forever. He had seen her face, then, before—seven years before, on his birthday, in the bedroom of the lonely inn.

"Be warned! oh, my son, be warned! Isaac, Isaac, let her go, and do you stop with me!"

Something darkened the parlor window as those words were said. A sudden chill ran through him, and he glanced sidelong at the shadow. Rebecca Murdoch had come back. She was peering in curiously at them over the low window-blind.

"I have promised to marry, mother," he said, "and marry I must."

The tears came into his eyes as he spoke and dimmed his sight, but he could just discern the fatal face outside moving away from the window.

His mother's head sank lower.

"Are you faint?" he whispered

"Broken-hearted, Isaac"

He stooped down and kissed her. The shadow, as he did so, returned to the window, and the fatal face peered in curiously once more.

Three weeks after that day Isaac and Rebecca were man and wife. All that was hopelessly dogged and stubborn in the man's moral nature seemed to have closed around his fatal passion, and to have fixed it unassailably in his heart.

After that first interview in the cottage parlor no consideration would induce Mrs. Scatchard to see her son's wife again, or even to talk of her when Isaac tried hard to plead her cause after their marriage.

This course of conduct was not in any degree occasioned by a discovery of the degradation in which Rebecca had lived There was no question of anything but the fearfully exact resemblance between the living, breathing woman and the specter-woman of Isaac's dream.

Rebecca, on her side, neither felt nor expressed the slightest sorrow at the estrangement between herself and her mother-in-law. Isaac, for the sake of peace, had never contradicted her first idea that age and long illness had affected Mrs. Scatchard's mind. He even allowed his wife to upbraid him for not having confessed to her at the time of their marriage engagement rather than risk anything by hinting at the truth. The sacrifice of his integrity before his one all-mastering delusion seemed but a small thing, and cost his conscience but little after the sacrifices he had already made.

The time of waking from this delusion—the cruel and the rueful time—was not far off. After some quiet months of married life, as the summer was ending, and the year was getting on toward the month of his birthday, Isaac found his wife altering toward him. She grew sullen and contemptuous; she formed acquaintances of the most dangerous kind in defiance of his objections, his entreaties, and his commands; and, worst of all, she learned, erelong, after every fresh difference with her husband, to seek the deadly self-oblivion of drink. Little by little, after the first miserable discovery that his wife was keeping company with drunkards, the shocking certainty forced itself on Isaac that she had grown to be a drunkard herself.

He had been in a sadly desponding state for some time before the occurrence of these domestic calamities. His mother's health, as he could but too plainly discern every time he went to see her at the cottage, was failing fast, and he upbraided himself in secret as the cause of the bodily and mental suffering she endured. When to his remorse on his mother's account was added the shame and misery occasioned by the discovery of his wife's degradation, he sank under the double trial—his face began to alter fast, and he looked what he was, a spirit-broken man.

His mother, still struggling bravely against the illness that was hurrying her to the grave, was the first to notice the sad alteration in him, and the first to hear of his last worst trouble with his wife. She could only weep bitterly on the day when he made his humiliating confession, but on the next occasion when he went to see her she had taken resolution in reference to his domestic afflictions which astonished and even alarmed him. He found her dressed to go out, and on asking the reason received this answer:

"I am not long for this world, Isaac," she said, "and I shall not feel easy on my death-bed unless I have done my best to the last to make my son happy. I mean to put my own fears and my own feelings out of the question, and to go with you to your wife, and try what I can do to reclaim her. Give me your arm, Isaac, and let me do the last thing I can in this world to help my son before it is too late."

He could not disobey her, and they walked together slowly toward his miserable home.

It was only one o'clock in the after-

FOLLY OF FAT EASILY OVERCOME

SLENDER Margaret Knolly, **now,** if you please. The fascinating leading lady of the Bijou, now more fascinating than ever, astonished all her friends on Broadway the other day by presenting to their admiring gaze a svelt and willowy form in place of the plump, not to say **fat,** outlines with which she gaily sailed away to new triumphs and foreign shores last January. After a good deal of diplomatic cross-examination from interested fat acquaintances the secret was cautiously whispered to a few dear friends, with the result that everybody knows it now. It was not exercise, nor fasting, nor sea air, nor worry about her new venture that had brought about this wonderful willowy change in the charming Margaret; no, none of these; nothing but a simple mixture which all good druggists are familiar with and can supply at small cost, to-wit. One-half ounce Marmola, one-half ounce Fluid Extract Cascara Aromatic, and three and one-half ounces Peppermint Water. 'Grown folks need a teaspoonful after meals and at bedtime," explained the now slender Margaret. "It is simply wonderful. It takes off the fat quickly, as much as a pound a day, and keeps it off. You can eat what you like too. In that respect it is unlike anything of the kind I ever heard of, and besides it has another splendid feature—it is entirely harmless, and will not cause wrinkles I think it is about as essential a toilet article for the woman who is fat and wants to get thinner as face powder. In order to get the best results, however, you should buy the Marmola in the original package and mix it with the other two ingredients after you get home."

noon when they reached the cottage where he lived. It was their dinner hour, and Rebecca was in the kitchen. He was thus able to take his mother quietly into the parlor, and then prepare his wife for the interview. She had fortunately drunk but little at that early hour, and she was less sullen and capricious than usual.

He returned to his mother with his mind tolerably at ease. His wife soon followed him into the parlor, and the meeting between her and Mrs. Scatchard passed off better than he had ventured to anticipate, though he observed with secret apprehension that his mother, resolutely as she controlled herself in other respects, could not look his wife in the face when she spoke to her. It was a relief to him, therefore, when Rebecca began to lay the cloth.

She laid the cloth, brought in the bread-tray, and cut a slice from the loaf for her husband, then returned to the kitchen. At that moment, Isaac, still anxiously watching his mother, was startled by seeing the same ghastly change pass over her face which had altered it so awfully on the morning when Rebecca and she first met. Before he could say a word, she whispered, with a look of horror:

"Take me back—home, home again, Isaac. Come with me, and never go back again."

He was afraid to ask for an explanation; he could only sign to her to be silent, and help her quickly to the door. As they passed the bread-tray on the table she stopped and pointed to it.

"Did you see what your wife cut your bread with?" she asked, in a low whisper.

"No, mother—I was not noticing—what was it?"

"Look!"

He did look. A new clasp-knife, with a buckhorn handle, lay with the loaf in the bread-tray. He stretched out his hand shudderingly to possess himself of it, but, at the same time, there was a noise in the kitchen, and his mother caught at his arm.

"The knife of the dream! Isaac, I'm faint with fear. Take me away before she comes back."

He was hardly able to support her. The visible, tangible reality of the knife struck him with a panic, and utterly destroyed any faint doubts that he might have entertained up to this time in relation to the mysterious dream-warning of nearly eight years before. By a last desperate effort, he summoned self-possession enough to help his mother out of the house—so quietly that the "Dream-Woman" (he thought of her by that name now) did not hear them departing from the kitchen.

"Don't go back, Isaac—don't go back!" implored Mrs. Scatchard, as he turned to go away, after seeing her safely seated again in her own room.

"I must get the knife," he answered, under his breath. His mother tried to stop him again, but he hurried out without another word.

On his return he found that his wife had discovered their secret departure from the house. She had been drinking, and was in a fury of passion. The dinner in the kitchen was flung under the grate; the cloth was off the parlor table. Where was the knife?

Unwisely, he asked for it. She was only too glad of the opportunity of irritating him which the request afforded her. He wanted the knfe, did he? Could he give her a reason why? No! Then he should not have it—not if he went down on his knees to ask for it. Further recrimination elicited the fact that she had bought it a bargain, and that she considered it her own especial property. Isaac saw the uselessness of attempting to get the knife by fair means, and determined to search for it, later in the day, in secret. The search was unsuccessful. Night came on, and he left the house to walk about the streets. He was afraid now to sleep in the same room with her.

Three weeks passed. Still sullenly enraged with him, she would not give up the knife; and still that fear of sleeping in the same room with her possessed him. He walked about at night, or dozed in the parlor, or sat watching by his mother's bedside. Before the expiration of the first week in the new month his mother died. It wanted then but ten days of her son's birthday. She had longed to live till that anniversary. Isaac was present at her death, and her last words in this world were addressed to him:

"Don't go back, my son, don't go back!"

He was obliged to go back, if it were only to watch his wife. Exasperated to the last degree by his distrust of her, she had revengefully sought to add a sting to his grief, during the last days of his mother's illness, by declaring that she would assert her right to attend the funeral. In spite all that he could do or say, she held with wicked pertinacity to her word, and on the day appointed for the burial forced herself—inflamed and shameless with drink—into her husband's presence, and declared that she would walk in the funeral procession to his mother's grave.

This last worst outrage, accompanied by all that was most insulting in word and look, maddened him for the moment. He struck her.

The instant the blow was dealt he repented it. She crouched down, silent in a corner of the room, and eyed him steadily; it was a look that cooled his hot blood and made him tremble. But there was no time now to think of a means of making atonement. Nothing remained but to risk the worst till the funeral was over. There was but one way of making sure of her. He locked her in her bedroom.

When he came back some hours after, he found her sitting, very much altered in look and bearing, by the bedside, with a bundle on her lap. She rose and faced him quietly and spoke with a strange stillness in her voice, a strange repose in her eyes, a strange composure in her manner.

"No man has ever struck me twice," she said, "and my husband shall have no second opportunity. Set the door open and let me go. From this day forth we see each other no more."

Before he could answer she passed him and left the room. He saw her walk up the street.

Would she return?

All that night he watched and waited, but no footstep came near the house. The next night, overpowered by fatigue, he lay down in bed in his clothes, with the door locked, the key on the table, and the candle burning. His slumber was not disturbed. The third night, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth passed, and nothing happened. He lay down on the seventh, still in his clothes, still with the door locked, the key on the table, and the candle burning, but easier in his mind.

Easier in his mind, and in perfect health of body when he fell off to sleep. But his rest was disturbed. He woke twice without any sensation of uneasiness. But the third time it was that never-to-be-forgotten shivering of the night at the lonely inn, that dreadful sinking pain at the heart, which once more aroused him in an instant.

His eyes opened toward the left-hand side of the bed, and there stood—

The Dream-Woman again? No! his wife; the living reality, with the dream-specter's face, in the dream-specter's attitude; the fair arm up, the knife clasped in the delicate white hand.

He sprang upon her almost at the instant of seeing her, and yet not quickly enough to prevent her from hiding the knife. Without a word from him—without a cry from her—he pinioned her in a chair. With one hand he felt up her sleeve, and there, where the Dream-Woman had hidden the knife, his wife had hidden it—the knife with the buckhorn handle, that looked like new.

In the despair of that dreadful moment his brain was steady, his heart calm. He looked at her fixedly with the knife in his hand, and said these last words:

"You have told me we should see each other no more, and you have come back. It is now my turn to go, and to go forever. I say that we shall see each other no more, and my word shall not be broken."

He left her, and set forth into the night. There was a bleak wind abroad, and the smell of recent rain was in the air. The distant church-clock chimed the quarter as he walked rapidly beyond the last houses in the suburb. He asked the first policeman he met what hour that was of which the quarter past had just struck.

The man referred sleepily to his watch, and answered, "Two o'clock." Two in the morning. What day of the month was this day that had just begun? He reckoned it up from the date of his mother's funeral. The fatal parallel was complete; it was his birthday!

Had he escaped the mortal peril which his dream foretold? or had he only received a second warning?

As that ominous doubt forced itself on his mind, he stopped, reflected, and turned back again toward the city. He was still resolute to hold to his word, and never to let her see him more; but there was a thought now in his mind of having her watched and followed. The knife was in his possession; the world was before him; but a new distrust of her—a vague, unspeakable, superstitious dread—had come over him.

"I must know where she goes, now she thinks I have left her," he said to himself, as he stole back wearily to the precincts of his house.

It was still dark. He had left the candle burning in the bed-chamber; but when he looked up to the window of the room now, there was no light in it. He crept cautiously to the house door. On going away, he remembered to have closed it; on trying it now, he found it open.

He waited outside, never losing sight of the house, till daylight. Then he ventured indoors—listened, and heard nothing—looked into kitchen, scullery, parlor, and found nothing; went up, at last, into the bedroom—it was empty. A picklock lay on the floor, betraying how she had gained entrance in the night, and that was the only trace of her.

Whither had she gone? That no mortal tongue could tell him. The darkness had covered her flight; and when the day broke no man could say where the light found her.

Before leaving the house and the town forever, he gave instructions to a friend and neighbor to sell his furniture for anything that it would fetch, and apply the proceeds to employing the police to trace her. The directions were honestly followed, and the money was all spent, but the inquiries led to nothing. The picklock on the bedroom floor remained the one last useless trace of the Dream-Woman.

The end.

* * *

The Sign of the Beetle.

(Continued from page thirteen.)

"You are going to take the oath of everlasting silence."

The beautiful, pale-faced listener almost started from her chair.

An oath of silence? Then she would be forever debarred from telling Julius Gwin about this man.

"But I want to take no oath," she cried as her blood ran cold in her veins.

"Aye, but you must, girl!"

She was struggling to her feet when his hand leaped forward and pushed her down.

"You must swear by the sacred head of Ptah that you will never reveal what you have seen in this room."

"I have seen nothing but you and the beetle."

"Is not that enough?" he cried, his face darkening once more. "You are the friend of the sleuth. You have been to him. You have told him a part of the secret of the pyramids. You——"

"But I will tell him no more!" rang from Kate's throat.

"I never trust your sex," he cried, wrathfully. "I have no use for the daughters of Eve."

His dark hand gripped her like a pincer of steel. He rose to his feet dragging her after him. She reeled giddily, her senses swimming madly, and all she saw was the face pressed almost against her own.

"Mercy! mercy!" she wailed.

"For one of your prying sex? Never!"

She was dragged halfway across the room. His eyes seemed to enlarge, then as suddenly to sink into immeasurable depths in his head. The patch over his nostrils appeared to glow.

He pushed her hand into the air and his voice filled her ears like a tocsin of doom.

"Swear by the sacred head of the Great Ptah, by the imperishable soul of the vast god of the old Egyptians!

(Continued next week.)

* * *

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THE BOY PAGE;

Or, IN SERVICE TO QUEEN BESS

By LIEUTENANT JACK JUDSON

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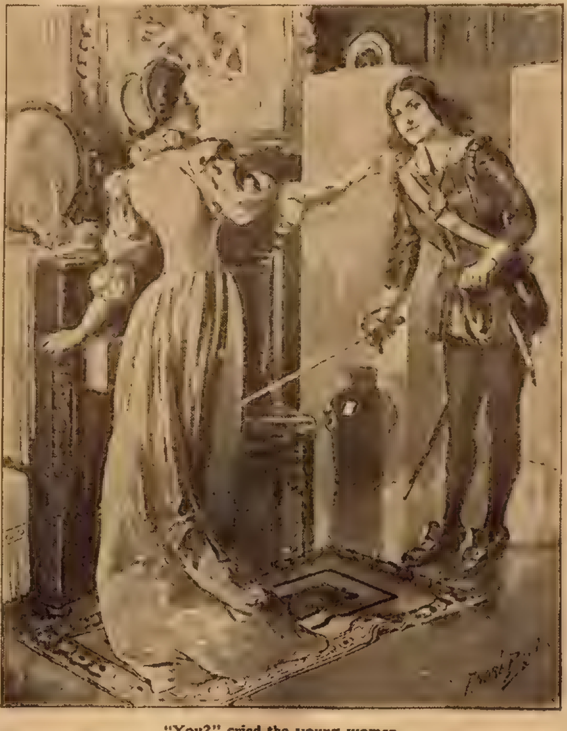
CHAPTER X.

PERCY AND THE QUEEN.

PERCY, the boy page, had not fared as badly as Roland thought.

We have seen him escape from the doom prepared for him through the interposition of the battling rats and how he released himself from the toils of the chair in the old house in Richmond Lane.



"You?" cried the young woman.

His unaided efforts to escape from the room were suddenly disturbed by the return of his captor.

Nell Archer had informed Jot that Roland was on the trail and that impish man determined to remove Percy as quickly as possible and subject him to another doom elsewhere.

Percy was so taken aback by the vision of his furious enemy that for a fatal moment he was unnerved. Jot leaped forward like a tiger and, hurling the youth against the wall, deprived him of his sword and once more he was in savage hands.

Chuckling over his success, though he could not contrive how the boy had 'scaped the dreadful doom, Jot dragged him into the underground tunnel which connected the house of the trap with his own and, reaching the other place, flung his captive rudely upon the floor.

"You're as slick as an eel," he said to the boy, as he showed his teeth most viciously. "Do not think that you are to continue in the Queen's service because fortune has favored you a little I am a man of resources and am not near the end of my tether."

Percy looked into the merciless eyes that seemed to snap fire and remained silent.

Presently Jot turned toward a cupboard set in the solid wall and that instant Percy was on his feet. The blade which lay on the floor was promptly in his hands and Jot was suddenly called to time by his voice.

"Ho, Master Jot!" cried Percy. "You should have eyes in the back of your head. You could then see better."

A howl of rage emanated from the throat of the man-beast.

Queen Bess's page was facing him with the naked blade and the next moment the tip of the slender steel was at his breast.

Jot turned white, for he did not expect mercy at the hands of his late captive.

For once the dwarf was not armed and he now found himself menaced by instant death.

"Open yon door!" demanded Percy. "I heard the hidden lock click when you shut it."

Jot trembled and looked at the sword-armed boy.

"I shall stand on no ceremony," Percy continued and his white face voiced his wrath. "I am master now!"

The imp turned sullenly and shot back the secret bolt. The door swung open of its own accord

"There are other locked doors between us and the street. Serve them all in the same manner."

Percy wanted to bury his steel in the bosom of the ill-shapen wretch, but at the same time he wanted him to feel the royal vengeance which he knew would be as terrible as any he could inflict.

Jot saw that he was entirely at Percy's mercy. He growled out his hatred and obeyed the command. Door after door was opened and at last the brave boy felt the cool air of night on his cheeks, Jot slamme the last door in his face and vanished.

"London Town shall be too hot to hold you now," shouted Percy as he plunged down the steps. "Your treachery to the Queen shall be rewarded by a rope on Tower Hill before many days."

With this he put off, running down the street with his face once more turned toward the great Tower itself.

He soon sounded his call across the moat, the drawbridge fell rattling upon its supports and he raced over it and through the heavy gate which banged behind him.

Entering the Tower, he bounded down the corridors and entered his own apartments where he made himself presentable as rapidly as possible.

"To the Queen at once!" he said to himself.

Five minutes later he stood bowing to Queen Bess who looked at him with one of her pleasant welcomes.

"How now, Master Sydney?" cried Elizabeth. "You look like a well run deer."

"I have just escaped from the hunter's snare, your majesty," was Percy's answer. "I have been in the hands of the Spanish plotters."

The Queen with a wave of her hand dismissed those in attendance upon her and gave Percy leave to speak without fear.

In as few words as possible he gave an account of his adventures, to all of which the Queen listened with bated breath, following every word as though her very life depended on it.

At the conclusion of his exciting narrative Percy drew from an inner pocket the chart which he had found in the shop of Toby Nimble, the armorer, and presented it.

Queen Elizabeth looked at it with a good deal of perplexity, but suddenly a light seemed to break upon her.

"As I live, it seems to be a diagram of the White Tower!" she exclaimed.

"It is nothing else, my good mistress," said Percy. "That chart was lost by Sir Rothby Graeme and I have no doubt that Jot was sent to the Tower to get another from the traitor who supplied him with the first."

"Say you so, my noble boy?"

"So seemeth it to me."

Queen Bess leaned forward, her chin on her hand and for a long time she remained silent buried in deep reflection.

"Can it be that my Tower is inhabited by traitors who are in the pay of the Spanish Philip?" she mused aloud. "I cannot think it and yet this chart must be evidence."

"Is Sir Rothby loyal?" questioned the youth.

"Really, I know not whom I can trust in these exciting times," replied Elizabeth. "I would have all my subjects good and true, but here is proof that the Spanish serpent is creeping through English grass. I will at once inquire into this important matter."

She turned to touch a silver bell which was within reach when Percy spoke again.

"I fancy, my good mistress, that Jot by now is not in the trap. I am quite sure he has taken refuge elsewhere."

"I will raze every house in London but what I find him," cried Elizabeth in her rage.

"I also have suspicions, from what I have seen, that women of quality are in the plot. It was the Duchess Main whom Roland and I saw the night Roland was pricked by Jarvis Tetton's blade in the dark alley. And it was the Princess Dawn who came down the stairs of the Rat Trap with Sir Rothby Graeme."

"I can crush my own sex as well as the conspirators of the other one!" exclaimed Elizabeth, shutting her jeweled hands. "I am the child of Henry VIII. He had no love for traitors and neither have I."

At this moment one of the servitors opened the door and bowed to the Queen.

"A boy would speak privately with your majesty," said the liveried person.

"Bid him come forward."

Percy uttered a cry of joy as Roland came forward.

"What, you here, Percy?" cried Roland, the moment he set eyes on his friend.

"Yes, and alive, Roland."

"The good saints be praised! I have come from the old house in Richmond Lane where I found the overturned chair, the powder and the dead rat."

"But I had vanished, eh, Roland?" laughed the boy page.

"You were gone, Percy, and full of fear, I have come to lay my fears before my great and excellent mistress."

"Percy speaks for himself," said Elizabeth with a smile. "He has had a narrow escape from the plotters."

"I am glad to find him alive. It was the girl, Nell, who played a bold trick on me and sent me on a bootless mission to Hempstead."

"It was to keep you from discovering that I had fallen into Jot's hands, Roland."

"I fear you have fasted," Elizabeth

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now said to Percy. "I will let your young friend feast with you."

"A thousand thanks, my royal mistress," cried the overjoyed Roland, and Percy forthwith led the way to where he knew they could enjoy the cuisine of the royal kitchen.

When they had feasted to their fill they were summoned back into the presence of Queen Elizabeth, who was giving certain directions to her favorite Leicester.

"These boys can tell you all," Queen Bess said, waving her hand to the Duke as Percy and Roland came forward. "I want Sir Rothby Graeme and Jot, the dwarf, apprehended at once. You will watch the houses of the Princess Dawn and the Duchess Main. See that those two women are dogged wherever they go. I shall crush this Spanish plot and reward all those who have been loyal to me."

Leicester bowed till his plumed hat almost touched the floor and took his departure.

"Now for the traitor within the Tower!" cried Elizabeth, rising. "I have in my mind one of whom report hasn't spoken favorably of late. If he has furnished Sir Rothby Graeme with the chart of the White Tower, woe to him and his!"

"Come, Roland," cried Percy in low tones, when they had left the Queen's presence. We will do a little hunting for ourselves. I have no doubt that could we but find Nell Archer we shall soon be on Jot's trail."

The two boys were soon across the moat and once more in the streets of London.

They at once made their way to Richmond Lane and entered Jot's house through the rear door. With their hands on their weapons they pushed from room to room, finding all in a state of abandonment just as they expected.

There were evidences of a hasty flight.

Jot had vanished and when the two boys turned from the old trap they looked at each other in dismay.

"I don't think we shall find our enemies at the coffee houses," Percy remarked. "Jot ere this has doubtless warned Sir Rothby of my escape. The game seems in the air and I have not much faith in Leicester's hunt."

"I didn't like his looks as he departed from the Queen's presence, Percy," Roland returned.

"He's a butterfly favorite at best and some day he will feel the Queen's displeasure."

Hardly knowing whither to go, but at the same time hoping that fortune would favor them, the young companions made their way to the Strand filled with gay crowds.

"Look, Percy," suddenly exclaimed Roland, seizing his friend's arm. "The witch who tricked me."

Percy turned quickly and his eyes fell upon a young girl who was hastening away.

"'Tis Nell Archer!" Roland resumed. "Come! We must not lose sight of Jot's friend and spy."

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE JAWS OF DEATH.

If Nell suspected she was watched she showed no outward signs of it.

She made her way through the throng of people who were talking loudly about the Spanish invasion and breathing hatred for King Philip. Perhaps she had found the vicinity too hot for her.

Percy and Roland kept her in sight and at last she darted into a street where the watchlights were few and the shadows many. She entered a house without knocking, but immediately after the door opened to let out no less a personage than Sir Rothby Graeme.

The boys were taken aback by the appearance of the Queen's enemy, and seeing that he was somewhat disguised they resolved to let Nell slip for the present and follow him.

Sir Rothby looked cautiously about and, seeing no danger, adjusted his hat so as to conceal a part of his face and hurried away.

"Now for the roebuck while the fawn rests," quoth Percy with a smile.

The nobleman led them a pretty long chase. To their surprise he led them to the Thames where he engaged a boatman to row him to a certain spot down the river. The boys were not near enough to make out all the directions.

"Water, they say, leaves no trail, but it must this time," said Percy eagerly. "We may find a boat somewhere."

They began to search the bank and suddenly came upon small boat moored by a rope.

"Just to our hand!" exclaimed Roland.

They loosened the boat and rowed out into the stream, taking care to proceed as noiselessly as possible. There were many craft in the river, but they avoided them all and soon perceived Sir Rothby's boat with the cloaked man sitting gloomily in the bow.

"He may lead us to the rendezvous of the conspirators," whispered Percy. "Good luck if he does."

The water hunt did not last long, for all at once Sir Rothby's boat darted toward the shore and they saw him leap out and bound up several steps and enter a large stone house which resembled a castle.

The boatman turned and rowed back, almost touching the two boys as he shot past them.

Percy and Roland now full on the chase, guided their light craft to the steps where they stopped. The house loomed high and grim above their heads.

They had hardly begun to inspect it when the noise of oars fell upon their ears and they beheld another boat approaching. It glided to the flight of steps and a cloaked man stepped out and entered the house—as Sir Rothby had done.

This confirmed their suspicions that a meeting of the Spanish conspirators was to be held beyond the grim walls.

"If we could but get into the house," said Roland.

"We might pay for our temerity with our lives," was the reply. "But we are serving Queen Bess and we must shirk no danger when we can aid her."

"You are right, Percy. I'm for getting into the house if possible."

"Then here goes for England and Queen Bess!"

At the top of the stone stair the boys found a slit-like door which was possibly used by the water sentry, but as no such person was to be seen they approached the door rather boldly and to their surprise discovered that it was slightly ajar.

Percy pushed it open and revealed a dark corridor which seemed to lead into the very heart of the structure

They closed the door behind them and moved forward by feeling their way along the cold walls.

The corridor terminated in a room of some dimensions, as they could make out by a light which streamed into it fro ' over the top of a door. This light showed them a staircase and they mounted it high enough so as to be able to look into the chamber from which the light came.

The scene that now burst upon their vision almost took their breath.

They were looking down i a spacious room, splendidly furnished and glowing with lights. Half a dozen noble looking men were present and among them he could see Sir Rothby Graeme, no longer cloaked, but standing forth as his true self with his gorgeous garments fully revealed to all.

Some of the others they well knew, having seen them on the street of London and all were men supposed to be loyal to Queen Bess.

A long table stood in the center of the chamber, and heavy oaken chairs were ranged around it.

Whilst the boys surveyed this scene a door opened and the Princess Dawn swept forward. The nobles bowed to her and she graciously returned their obeisance.

"We are all here," suddenly said Sir Rothby. "I have the most flattering news from our future ruler, Philip.

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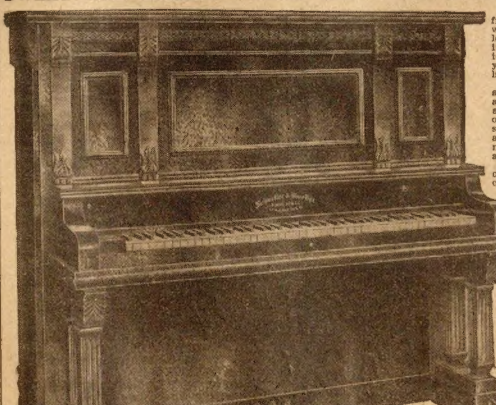

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This outburst of treason caused the boys to look at each other in amazement.

"I have here the diagram of the interior of the White Tower," continued Graeme. "It was furnished by one who is near the Queen. If, by any chance defeat should stare us in the face, we can reach the royal person and do what the fleet may fail to accomplish."

There was but one meaning to these words. If Philip of Spain failed to reach London, then the dagger was to be called into use to rid England of her great queen.

For an hour Percy and Roland remained on the stairway listening to the details of the great plot. The Princess Dawn was one of the prime movers in the conspiracy and her eyes flashed fire whenever she mentioned the name of Elizabeth.

"We have seen enough," said Percy at last. "The whole plot has been laid bare before us. Now is the time for the Queen to strike."

They tiptoed down the stair and moved toward the little door.

"It is locked. We are prisoners in the lion's den," gasped Roland, as he recoiled and tried to find Percy's face in the darkness.

"There must be some way out," was the reply couched in firm tones.

They went back to the staircase once more, but did not stop to survey the scene in the room of the conspirators.

The door at the head of the flight of steps yielded to them and they entered a sleeping chamber.

From the window they could see the lights of London and the beacons of the Tower were plainly visible.

All at once a loud voice which seemed to ring doom in their ears startled every fiber in their beings.

"See that the whole house is searched," cried the voice. "The boat betrays the spies!"

Percy and Roland looked at each other without so much as a word on their lips.

They were caught like rats in a trap. Already they imagined they heard footsteps on the staircase, and, facing the main door, they drew their swords, resolving to sell their young lives as dearly as possible.

There was no doubt that the house was being searched below for they could hear doors open and shut and now and then the voices of men.

"Quick," cried Percy. "Behind the bed."

They dodged behind the great bedstead and its darkish curtains, but not for a single moment did they relax their hold on their blades.

Suddenly the door was thrown open.

"No one in here," said a voice. "This is Lady Jane's sleeping chamber and no one, not even a spy, durst invade it."

The door was slammed to with a bang and the boys breathed freer.

Presently the door was opened once more and they saw a beautiful young woman enter.

She carried a candle in a gold candlestick and when she had closed the door she seated herself at a table and began to write.

"I wish I dared to reveal this infamous plot," she said aloud. "These wretches will not stop short of taking the Queen's life. But I dare not. My father would not hesitate to slay me on the spot. He loves me, but he is hand in glove with those who hate Queen Bess."

She went back to her writing again, but stopped suddenly and began to pace the floor in an agony of emotion.

"If I dared. Oh, if I dared!" the boys heard her exclaim. "May heaven intervene to save the Queen."

She tore up what she had written and held the fragments in the flame till the last one was consumed.

"I wonder if there were really spies in the house?" she went on. "If there were and they are found there will be bloodshed, for the Queen's foes will stop at nothing to shield themselves."

The next instant Lady Jane gave a little shriek and recoiled for Percy stood before her, looking into her white face.

His sword was still in his hand and his livery gave him away.

"You?" cried the young woman. "You are the Qeen's page."

Percy smiled.

"I have that honor," said he. "I will conceal nothing from you, Lady Jane. I am Percy Sydney and in Queen Bess's services."

"But now in the jaws of death!" ejaculated Lady Jane Ruthledge. "How came you here, boy?"

"By the little door on the water front."

"Are you alone?"

"No. I have a friend with me," and Roland stepped into the light.

"Two for the lions if they find you!" cried Lady Jane.

"Is there no way out in safety?"

The young lady hesitated.

"Any way is dangerous," she said at length. "They are ransacking the house for you Oh, you foolish boys!"

"It is an honor to die for Queen Bess," answered Percy. "If die we must it shall be with our swords in our hands."

Lady Jane looked at them with a feeling of pride.

"There is a secret way," she said, but it may be guarded by my father's minions."

"We'll take that way," answered the boy page.

The beautiful young woman was calm now.

"Come, then. I can show you the way, but you must take the consequences of your folly."

She opened the door and led the boys down a narrow corridor to another portal which she opened with a key which she took from one of the pockets of her dress.

"Here is a stairway at the foot of which you will find a door," she continued. "Here is the key that will open it. Once outside, you will fly for your lives."

"A thousand thanks!" said Percy, accepting the key.

"A thousand prayers for your safety," was the response. "Go! Go! They may soon be here."

The boys sprang down the steps. As they reached the bottom a door jangled above them, a light flashed down the staircase and they beheld two armed men staring at them like tigers about to spring!

CHAPTER XII.
AN IMPORTANT CAPTURE.

"The lions!" cried Roland, as he stared at the men at the head of the staircase.

"Quick!" answered Percy, without taking his eyes from the sight which was sufficient to awe the stoutest hearts. "You have the key to the door. We must get it between us and those minions."

Roland went at the lock direct. The key slipped in, but to his utter dismay it refused to turn.

The men on the stair were coming down but with extreme caution, for they saw that the boys were well armed and that, having been brought to bay, they would sell their lives as dearly as they could.

Whilst Roland worked Percy watched, his fingers gripping the hilt of his straight blade and his muscles as hard as steel.

Midway on the stair the two men halted. Another was holding the light above them and its flare lit up the scene.

Suddenly one of the fellows, a slender man in a dark doublet, gave a charging shout and sprang forward. Percy, firmly planted, met him on the lowest step.

There was a quick thrust by the minion, but the Queen's page turned his sword aside and his own steel, darting upward like a springing serpent, entered the man's body so that he fell in a heap gasping on the staircase.

For a moment the other gazed grimly at the boy's work, then with a cry of vengeance he leaped over his companion and came down like some great beast.

Roland turned from the door and with Percy met the man halfway.

There was a tense cry from the person holding the light at the top of the stair, a cry of horror and then he threw the candle headlong. It whirled over and over in its downward flight and alighted between the man and boys.

Blinded by the light the man struck out madly and both boys, thrusting out at the same moment, sheathed their blades in his body. He toppled backward and fell across his comrade.

The stairway was dark now.

"Once more the door!" cried Percy. "We shall have the whole house upon us in a minute."

Madly Roland went to work again. The key suddenly clicked in the lock and the secret door opened.

It was just in the nick of time for there were shouts on the stair, loud cries and curses of madmen.

Percy darted through the doorway and Roland following, swung it back with all his might.

The boys found themselves in a darkish court. It was surrounded by a wall as high as their heads, but this did not dismay them.

Behind the closed door men were pounding like furies. A hammer seemed to be attacking the lock.

The young friends dashed at the wall and leaped upon it. Not far away they beheld the boat lights on the river. Once beyond the wall and safety would smile upon them.

It was a good drop, but with their blades in their teeth they boldly ventured and landed in safety.

In another moment they had gathered themselves together and were racing away.

They had escaped from the lions by a miracle. But for Lady Jane they would have fallen into the hands of the Queen's enemies, and as they hastened on they wondered if their preserver would be called to account for helping them.

They had discovered enough in the strange house to condemn the noble plotters against Queen Bess.

They knew that now they would be hunted by the Spanish conspirators, that Sir Rothby Graeme and his companions would leave no stone unturned for their capture.

They proceeded to Roland's house where they were greeted by Janet who welcomed them with joy.

She set before them the choicest contents of her cupboard and listened to their story whilst they ate.

When they had done ample justice to the feast they resolved to seek the Tower and narrate their adventures to Queen Bess herself. Janet saw them depart with many misgivings. She feared that they might have been followed by a spy and, girl-like, implored them to be cautious.

"Behold!" suddenly exclaimed Roland as they turned into another street. "This is a pretty hour for a procession."

Percy had already stopped and now hugged the wall of a house with his right hand on the hilt of his sword.

"As I live, it is the Mad Duchess!" he cried with a glance at Roland. "She parades after everybody else is abed. And her minions must be as mad as their mistress."

It was a most uncommon sight. First came ten halberdiers, with steel headpieces, then six men in velvet, with the arms of their strange mistress worked in gold braid on the sleeves. Behind them six stout men bore a palanquin or state chair with curtains at the sides and inside the novel arrangement sat the Mad Duchess bedecked from head to foot in gorgeous raiment.

She was an old lady of immense wealth and known throughout the kingdom.

She was always followed by a motley crowd of men, women and boys whenever she appeared in public, for she scattered coins along her way and there was ever a terrible scramble for them.

It was now far past midnight, but the money getters were out in force and the Mad Duchess's minions could hardly hold the crowd back.

Everywhere people, hearing the cries of the mob, were raising their windows and calling for the old woman to bestow some of her wealth upon them.

The whole scene held the attention of the two boys.

The old lady, bepowdered and frilled, was leaning back in the palanquin with half-closed eyes. A man walked on each side of the curtained chair with drawn sword to keep the people away from their crazy mistress.

When the palanquin had reached a spot opposite the boys the demands of crowd suddenly increased like a storm. The Mad Duchess raised her head and looked out.

"Take her money!" cried the leader of the mob, a giant in red shirt sleeves. "She has robbed us common people to get her riches and she must give them back."

The guards beside the chair drew closer.

"Away with her minions!" roared the crowd in unison. "The old hag's wealth belongs to us. Down with the mad witch of London!"

The rush came the next moment with the fury of a tornado. The guards were thrown aside like bundles of wheat. In an instant they were trampled under foot, the palanquin was seized amid the jeers of the mob and overturned.

A wild cry of terror welled from inside of it.

Against the furies the halberdiers seemed impotent. They were cowards at heart. The cries of the old lady were pitiful.

"A mob is always made up of cowards!" cried Percy. "Come, Roland, we will defend the Mad Duchess."

Forthwith the two boys darted into the street and fell upon the scrambling crowd with the flats of their swords. It was a brave thing to do.

They struck right and left and soon cleared a way to the palanquin.

The crowd fell off like wounded animals.

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this strange story. You will find it strong and captivating to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscriptions and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

* * *

How He Got Coffee.

Among the coffee drinkers a high place must be given to Bismarck. He liked coffee unadulterated. While with the Prussian Army in France he one day entered a country inn and asked the host if he had any chicory in the house. He had. Bismarck said: "Well, bring it me all you have." The man obeyed and handed Bismark a canister of chicory.

"Are you sure this is all you have?" demanded the chancellor.

"Yes, my lord, every grain."

"Then," said Bismarck, keeping the canister by him, "go and make a pot of coffee."

*

None on Hustler.

John Adams Thayer, the well-known publisher, once declared at an advertiser's dinner in New York that when he was a printer he used to change his job six or seven times a year.

"I always bettered myself," said Mr. Thayer. "I always advanced my pay a dollar or more by every change. I remember a Boston foreman who said to me when I told him I was leaving for Chicago:

"'Well, I suppose you'll get a job out there; but remember, boy, a rolling stone gathers no moss.'

"'Moss, sir,' I replied, 'is for ruins.'"

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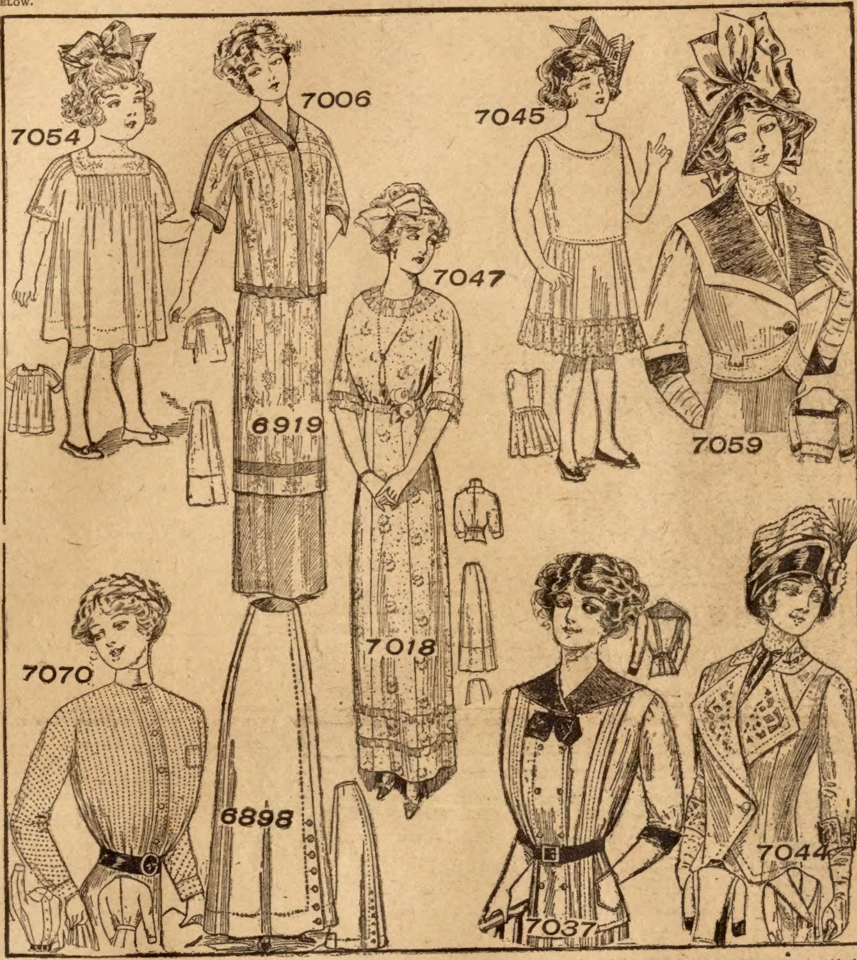

7054—Child's Tucked One-Piece Dress, 2, 4 and 6 years. For a child of four years of age will be required 3 yards of material 27, 2⅜ yards 36 or 44 inches wide, with 4 yards of insertion.

7006—House Jacket, Small 34 or 36, Medium 38 or 40, Large 42 or 44 bust. 6919—Five Gored Skirt, 22 to 30 waist. For a woman of medium size the jacket will require 2½ yards of material 27 or 36 or 1¾ yards 44 inches wide; for the upper part of the skirt will be needed 3¾ yards 27, 3 yards 36 or 44 inches wide, for the lower portion of the skirt 3 yards 27, 1¾ yards 36 or 44 inches wide, and for the trimming 1 yard of additional material 27 inches wide will suffice.

7047—Plain Blouse or Under-Slip, 34 to 42 bust. For a woman of medium size will be required 2¼ yards of material 27, 1¾ yards 36 or 1¼ yards 44 inches wide.

7018—Five Gored Skirt, 22 to 34 waist. For a woman of medium size the plain skirt will require 6½ yards of material 27, 5¼ yards 36 or 4 yards 44 inches wide when material has figure or nap, 5¼ yards 27 inches wide when material has neither. For the skirt with the flounce will be needed 4½ yards of material 27, 3⅝ yards 36 or 2¾ yards 44 inches wide when material has figure or nap; 2 yards 27 or 36 or 1¼ yards 44 inches wide when it has not, with 3 yards 27 or 36, 2 yards 44 inches wide for the flounce.

7045—Girl's Four-Gored Petticoat with Under Body, 8, 10 and 12 years. For a girl of 10 years of age will be required 3⅛ yards of material 27 or 1⅞ yards 36 inches wide, with 2¾ yards of embroidery and 2 yards of insertion to trim as illustrated.

7059—Eton or Bolero Jacket for Misses and Small Women, 14, 16 and 18 years. For the 16 year size will be required 2¾ yards of material 27, 2 yards 36 or 1⅝ yards 44 inches wide, with ¾ yard 27 inches wide for the collar and cuffs.

7070—Plain Shirt Waist, 34 to 44 bust. For the medium size will be required 2⅜ yards of material 27, 2¼ yards 36 or 44 inches wide.

6898—Four-Piece Skirt, 22 to 30 waist. The quantity of material required for the medium size is 5⅝ yards 27 inches wide, 4 yards 44 or 2¾ yards 52 inches wide when material has figure or nap; 2¾ yards 44 inches wide when material has neither figure nor nap. The width of the skirt at the lower edge is 2⅝ yards.

7037—Outing Blouse, 34 to 42 bust. For the medium size will be required 4⅜ yards of material 27, 3¼ yards 36 or 2¾ yards 44 inches wide with ⅝ yard 27 inches wide for trimming.

7044—Short Coat, 34 to 42 bust. For a woman of medium size will be required 4 yards of material 27, 2¾ yards 36 or 2½ yards 44 inches wide, with ¾ yard 27 inches wide for collar and cuffs when made from contrasting material.

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FOR YOUTHFUL EYES

A MOTOR CAR.

If I had a motor car, splendid and bright,
Do you think I would see it at rest?
Indeed, I'd be riding from morning to night.
First north, and then east, south and west.

I'd say to the children I'd see by the way:
"Want to take a nice ride in my car?
Then run and ask mother if she says you may—
We won't go so awfully far."

I'd say to old ladies, with hair white and thin,
Old ladies with faces so sad:
"Will you go for a ride? Let me help you get in;
To take you I'm awfully glad."

I'd promise myself that once every day
A cripple should ride in my car.
I'd take the tired women who faint by the way,
The ones who must work and walk far.

I'd take the worn fathers, who toil until late,
And I'd give them fresh air and a rest;
They'd go to their desks in a fine rested state
When an hour they had been as my guest.

I'd take the tired mothers whose children are cross,
And I'd ride them, and feed them up too.
Don't you think that if I had a big auto horse
I'd find many things I could do?

❦

Trial By Jury.

If there was a spoiled dog, it was Minx, and a proper name she had, too. Of course, she was quite young when she did the dreadful thing that led to her trial and conviction, but youth is not always an excuse.

Minx was one of nine children and came to the Hortons when she was small enough to be carried in Tom's pocket. She was a Skye terrier, and she became so attached to Tom that Elsie held him responsible for the whole affair.

The little girls had been busy dressmaking for a month, for Emmelina Horton, the big wax doll, Elsie's oldest daughter, was about to be married. There was to be a grand wedding at Elsie's house, and all Emmelina's friends, with their mammas, were to be invited. So every afternoon they met in the Hortons' nursery and spent a busy, happy time making wonderful garments for this occasion.

Once in a while, when Tom was out, Minx had scratched on the door, behind which she heard the children laughing and talking, but when Elsie had allowed her to come in she had been so mischievous that she had been sent away in disgrace.

One afternoon, unfortunately, Elsie left the nursery door open while she ran downstairs to say goodby to some of her friends. Minx peeped in, saw something white lying on Elsie's little work-table as well as some pretty scraps on the floor and entered to investigate. The result was the "ruination," as Elsie remarked, of Emmelina's wedding gown and the shutting up of Minx in the cellar to wait her trial. Of course the wedding was postponed.

The trial took place in the nursery the next day. There was a jury of half a dozen little girls, a half-dozen being considered quite enough for a dog. Elsie was the judge, and Tom, the policeman, brought in poor Minx on her hind legs, looking very much ashamed of herself.

She listened to the whole story, with her head on one side and her right ear cocked, and once or twice her soft, pathetic eyes filled with tears. Sometimes she wagged her stump of a tail quite piteously, and when the torn-up white dress was shown to her she looked guilty indeed.

When the judge pronounced sentence Minx immediately rolled over and played "dead," so deep was the disgrace. She had to wear clothes like a doll for a whole week, and Tom had to take her out each day in a doll carriage.

It was a good lesson to Minx, who had a terrible ordeal to go through every time she met her dog friends. Nowadays she never goes near the nursery, and if the faintest allusion is made to Emmelina's wedding dress the culprit will immediately put her tail between her legs and creep under the sofa.

❦

Difference of a Letter.

A grain merchant in Neligh, Neb., wanted a supply of oats, and so he wrote out an advertisement on the typewriter with a lot of carbon copies, and he sent copies to several newspapers in near-by towns. He meant to write that he wanted 10,000 bushels of oats, but instead of the "o" on the typewriter his finger struck the "c," and so it appeared by the advertisement that he wanted 10,000 bushels of cats.

He began to get them in a few days. They were shipped to him by the railroad, and he would not take the mewing beasts. The railroad agent did not know what to do with the pussies, and so he asked the superintendent, who told him to let them out of their boxes. He did so, and then there was a plague of cats in Neligh. By this time the small boys of the town had heard of the merchant advertising for cats, and so they went through the alleys and back streets and caught the stray cats that the agent had let go. They caught the cats and took them to the merchant and tried to sell them to him, but for some reason or other he would not buy what he had advertised for. It seems that he had developed a distaste for pussycats. But the cats still came by rail, though not in such large numbers as before, and the people in Neligh wondered whether they couldn't use cats for rabbit stew or something of the sort.

❦

IN THE LAND OF JINGLES.

In the lovely land of Jingles, where everything must rhyme,
The dogs and cats and children, too, must have a merry time.

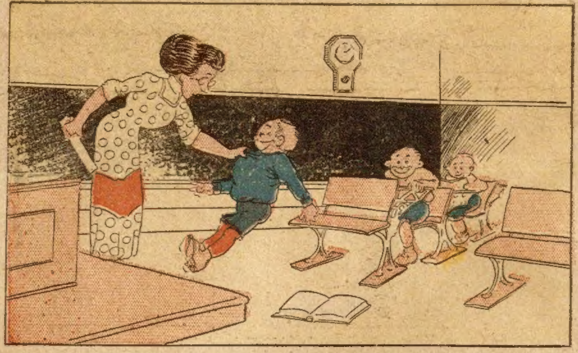
The bears will never eat you up but hug you just for fun,
There's never any work to do, for all the work is done.

The swallows and the humming birds all have a lovely time
In the lovely land of Jingles, where everything must rhyme.

❦

Like the Man from Nantucket.

You remember, surely, the story about the "man from Nantucket, who kept all his wealth in a bucket; but his daughter, named Nan, ran away with a as for the bucket, Nantucket. Missouri there was a man tha daughter named Nan or anythin but he did keep his wealth in a buck in several of them, to be exact. He was a hermit and lived in a poor house with ancient furniture that was found to be worth $9.15, and in this house he died, but before he died he told his relatives about the money he had hidden. There were pails full of it. He seemed to prefer pails to bags and banks. His estate altogether, including the furniture, was worth about $60,000.



Teacher—Willie, if you run away from school again I shall have you suspended.
Willie—That means I don't have to come at all.
Teacher—It means you won't be allowed to come.
Willie—Gee! I'm glad the runnin's good!

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